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From Women's Quota to "Women's Politics":

The Impact of Gender Quotas on Political Representations and Practices in the Pakistani National Parliament[1]

VIRGINIE DUTOYA

In 2002, the Pakistani President (and Chief of Army Staff) Pervez Musharraf announced that 17% of the seats in the upcoming elections to the National Assembly and Senate would be reserved for women. This raised the proportion of female legislators in the Pakistani Parliament from 3% to 21% (see table 1 below). This was not the first time Pakistan had known quotas for women, but they had never been to such a level.[2] Thus the entry of more than 80 women in Parliament was considered a game changer in Pakistani politics, and Musharraf's decision was generally praised by women's movement activists. Various commentators of Pakistani politics publicly expressed their hope that women would help revive politics by taking on issues that had been neglected so far (Chaudhry 2002, Dawn 2002). These expectations were not altogether unreasonable. Most of the women elected through quotas were new entrants in parliament, with no previous political experience and thus could be expected to behave differently from the men who had dominated the Pakistani political life so far. Moreover, as underlined by Anne Phillips (1995, 67-73), women quotas, and more generally the "politics of presence" rely on the idea that women are going to do politics differently, be it because of their so-called feminine qualities or because they will bring into the political arena issues that used to be marginalized. While the essentialist implications of such a position are discussed in Pakistan, it is a dominant point of view on quotas, endorsed by those who were instrumental in implementing them.[3]

In that respect, even if women do not constitute a self-evident and objective group, it seems important to question institution of purdah whether female Members of Parliament (MPs) display a distinctive political behavior and have different representations, and whether quotas create or accentuate such differences. This question is particularly relevant in Pakistan, as quotas for women consist of reserved seats which are allocated on the basis of party lists and the proportion of votes the respective party could win, while the other Members of National Assembly (MNAs) are elected via competition in their territorial constituencies. In the upper chamber of Parliament, the Senate, all MPs are indirectly elected. In both cases, the result is that female MPs elected on the basis of reserved seats do not have a territorial constituency. It thus prevents them from establishing the patron/client relationship which is generally considered as the core of Pakistani electoral politics (Talbot 2005, 2).

Moreover, women MPs have to operate within the Pakistani social and political context. As citizens, they have equal political rights, but they face various inequali-

ties, whether *de jure* (in family law for instance) or *de facto* in daily life. In particular, though situations differ tremendously from one social context to another[4], one can reasonably argue that women have less access to the public sphere and their behavior is subjected to a strict control both by the family and the state. Even though gender segregation and veiling are not compulsory, free mingling between both sexes is generally considered improper (Weiss 2001, 69). Women are meant to behave in a modest and respectable manner when they venture in the public sphere (Mirza 2002, 42), as epitomized by the institution of purdah.[5] The term hails from the Persian word for 'curtain' but its significance goes far beyond the veil (hijab). It refers to a set of norms and practices that regulate men's and women's interactions, from the home to the public sphere. Schematically, purdah relies on the principle that women should behave with modesty, avoid interactions with na-mahram men (men they could marry), avoid leaving their home, or if they are compelled to, to fully cover their body (Mandelbaum 1988). In this context, though women always had the right to contest direct elections, few women do so and even fewer get elected. The first directly elected MP in Pakistan was Begum Naseem Wali Khan in 1977 and the number of such directly elected women has remain very low until the first decade of the 21st century (see table 1).

Thus, it is only in 2002 that a significant number of women got a seat in Parliament, making it possible to analyze their actions and representation both quantitatively and qualitatively. To evaluate whether women parliamentarians have a specific way of doing politics, be it in terms of issues or in terms of political style, three sets of questions seem particularly interesting; first, what are the issues that women MPs choose to address? In particular, how do they respond to the common expectation that they will take a special interest in women's issues, and more generally, in the "politics of care" (Phillips 1995, 68)? Second, what type of "parliamentary roles" do they endorse and how do they justify them? The concept of "parliamentary roles" is here understood as sets of characteristic desires and behaviors (Searing 1994, 22), which operate as ideal (but changing) representations recognized by all actors (Navarro 2009, 32-40). Classically, the typologies of roles are based on an opposition between work oriented towards nation-wide issues (policy advisor, party representative) and the work grounded in the constituency (constituency delegate), that is the tension between the national and the local (Pitkin 1967, 218). In the case of Pakistani women MPs, this aspect seems particularly interesting to investigate, since most of them have no constituency as such, thus no "local" on which they could ground their politics. The last set of questions deals with the values and work ethics MPs refer to: do women consider that they have feminine values and qualities? If yes, which ones? In that respect, we may ask whether being a woman may become a "strategic identity" (Collovald 1988, 40) in the political competition, and whether women practice a form of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1988, 13).

In order to answer these questions, it is important to use the concept of "gender" not as a convenient substitute for women, but as concept designating the (norma-

tive) process by which differences are attached to sex and a hierarchy is created, as well as the result of this process (the gender order). In consequence, the relational dimension of gender is of great importance and though in this article the focus is on women, data was also collected on men. The analysis will be based on 42 qualitative interviews conducted with Pakistani MPs (including 30 women) between 2008 and 2010, the study of MPs political action through data provided by the parliamentary secretariat as well as interviews with Pakistani feminists and members of organizations concerned with the advancement of women's rights and democracy.[6] I will first outline how the concept of "women's politics" is put forth as a new way of doing politics, both in terms of practices and ethical values defined as feminine. Yet, this concept has limitations as there is an important gap between discourses and practices, but also because it tends to blur the fact that more often than not, women MPs do not choose to do politics "as women", but are forced to do so.

Table 1: Women as Members in the Pakistan National Assembly (1962-2008)

Year	Total no. of parl. seats	No. of women elected on general seats	No. of seats reserved for women	Total no. of women MNAs (%)
1962	156	2	6	8 (5.1%)
1965	156	0	6	6 (3.8%)
1970	313	1	12	13 (4.2%)
1977	210	2	10	12 (5.7%)
1985	237	4	20	23 (9.7%)
1988	237	4	20	24 (10.1%)
1990	217	2	0	2 (0.9%)
1993	217	4	0	4 (1.8%)
1997	217	7	0	7 (3.2%)
2002	342	14	60	74 (21.6%)
2008	342	16	60	76 (22.2%)

Source: Own compilation with data from the Secretariat of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

From female representatives to women's representation: the invention of women's politics

In 2002, women reserved seats were implemented in both chambers of the Pakistani Parliament. In the Senate, where the election is indirect, women seats did not differ from other seats.[7] In the National Assembly, 60 seats were added to the directly

elected seats and allocated to the parties in proportion to their results in the general election. Thus all parties participating in the election had to submit a list of candidates for the reserved seats. Women were allowed to run for any of the general seats; 14 women were directly elected as Member of National Assembly (MNA) in 2002 and 16 in 2008. Two explanations were generally proposed to this significant (in the Pakistani context) number of directly elected MPs. First, many former (male) MPs were prevented to be candidates in 2002 and 2008 due to the fact they were either facing charges of corruption (in 2002) or were not university (or madrasa[8]) graduates which was compulsory in 2002 and 2008. Thus their wife or daughter was elected in their place. Second, the issue of women's political rights and the importance of women's representation have been widely discussed in Pakistan in the 2000s, thus creating an incentive to parties to field more women. While both explanations probably hold some truth, the first one seems more important. Indeed, for the general elections of May 2013, it was no longer compulsory for candidates to have a degree, and only six women have been elected (some results were still pending at the time of writing).

Who are the female parliamentarians?

The electoral system for the reserved seats favors the major parties, which got most of those seats in 2002 and 2008.[9] These parties are the Pakistani Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PMLQ), the Pakistani Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The two former parties are splinter parties from the Muslim League, a party which played an important role in the creation of Pakistan. The PMLQ and PMLN are the two main (but not only) parties that invoke the heritage of the League, yet they oppose each other as the PMLQ was initially constituted by General Musharraf's supporters after his 1999 coup against Nawaz Sharif, while the supporters of the latter belong to the PMLN. The PPP was created in 1967 by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. His daughter Benazir Bhutto took the lead of the party after her father's assassination in 1979. She was assassinated, too, in December 2007 – shortly before the elections which were won by her party in 2008. Its new leader Asif Ali Zardari, widower of Benazir Bhutto, was elected President of the Republic the same year. The other parties which benefited from the quotas were two Islamic parties (which contested the elections together in 2002): the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUIF), the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), a party mainly active in urban Sindh, and the Awami National Party (ANP), a party whose stronghold is in the northern province Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa as well as smaller parties which obtained one or two seats.

Taking into account that many women got reelected after a first mandate in either of the chambers, about 150 women sat in the Pakistani parliament between 2002 and 2011. Though diverse in terms of geographic origins and party affiliations, these women share a certain number of sociological characteristics that distinguish them

from their male counterparts. This appears clearly for the MNAs elected in 2002, for whom reliable statistics are available. They were younger than their male counterparts (an average 42 years old at election, against 47 years old for men), had higher academic degrees[10], but a much higher proportion of them did not declare any profession (40% of women elected in 2002 against 6.4% of men). It has to be noted that this level of education sets the female MNAs apart in Pakistan, since according the 1998 official census, only 32% of women and 54.8% of men were literate. Finally, there is a paucity of reliable data on the MPs' social class[11], but the available data (Bari 2009), cross-checked with information regarding level of education and their place of residence indicates that most women MPs belong to the upper-middle class and in that respect, they are quite similar to male MPs (Zaidi 2004). But more than the sociological differences that exist between the MPs of both sexes in terms of age, profession and education, the major difference between men and women parliamentarian is that women had less political experience, as 85% of them were elected for the first time in 2002 (to any position) while it was the case of only 56% of men.[12] Moreover, women MPs develop distinctive political representations when it comes to defining their role as MP, the issues they want to take on, and the way they intend to tackle these issues.

Defining "women" as a constituency

A constituency is the "group in which a citizen's vote is counted for the purpose of electing a political representative" (Rehfeld 2005, 4). Most of the women who came to Parliament since 2002 were elected on the basis of reserved seats, and thus they had no territorial constituency or any type of constituency as such, since strictly speaking, they are not elected and constitutionally, there is nothing attaching MPs elected on reserved seats to the representation of their group. Yet, there was a general expectation, in the civil society or in the media, that they would represent the interests of women as a group, and to that extent that they were responsible before this constituency as an MP would be in front of his or her territorial constituency. These expectations appear quite clearly in two articles published by *Dawn*, an English-language daily generally described as liberal. In one of them, women MPs were presented as a "ray of hope" for Pakistani women (Dawn 2002), while in the second, the journalist tried to set some goals to the women sitting in parliament; writing that:

> The women representatives in particular face a heavy agenda comprising a litany of problems and some complex social issues like the vice of dowry. They also come face to face with a defining moment of identifying their future role and the pathway to be chosen by them to retrieve the women community from a life of appalling squalor. (Chaudhry 2002)

The feminist activists were generally more nuanced in their demands towards female MPs, as they felt that women should take part in all aspects of the political

life (F1 to F6). But many of them still considered that female MPs would be more responsive to women's issues, and they could be disappointed when this wasn't the case. For instance, when in 2009 the government concluded a truce with an Islamic movement, the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, in order to restore peace in the region of Swat, the women MPs were criticized for agreeing to the terms of the peace (sharia as the law in the district), as expressed by the eloquent title of a tribune signed by Zubeida Mustafa; "Where were you, dear sisters?" (Mustafa 2009). Women MPs did not seem altogether opposed to this perception of their role, and about 50% of the female MPs I met defined women's issues as one of the areas they wanted to work on. They generally justified this position by explaining that women are in a specific (and difficult) position within the society, a position that men are neither able to understand, nor willing to represent. Their ability to represent women is thus both the result of circumstances (it is socially difficult for women to meet a male representative) and essence (there is a "female nature" that only women can understand), as explained to me by this MP:

> (W)omen, when they are in politics, they understand the inner problems of the female community, they are given to work for the legislation for women, in a way which I think that men cannot do, because there is gender discrimination everywhere in Pakistan also, and you know they don't feel for women so deeply as a woman can. (MP8).

Acting for women in Parliament

Beyond those declarations of intentions, it is difficult to define and measure "acting for women". A notable element is the women's caucus created in 2008 in order to unite all women of Parliament across party lines and generate new forms of collective action. Moreover, women have proposed a great number of bills aiming at advancing women's rights. In the 13th legislature (acting since February 2008), almost 30% of all private member's bills (that is bills initiated by one or several MPs and not by the government) introduced by a woman or a group composed of women directly concerned gender issues (female workers' rights, domestic violence, rights of transsexuals, etc.). Moreover, it seems that women issues are considered as belonging to women. Between 2002 and 2007, only 17 out of 269 male MNAs individually initiated issues concerning women's rights or supported their female counterparts on those issues (Mirza/Wagha 2010, 86). In the 13th legislature, only one man proposed two bills related to women's issues, while four bills on this subject were proposed by groups including both men and women. Beyond women's interests, strictly speaking, many female MPs showed more interest than men in issues pertaining to the "politics of care", such as health, education, children's rights, etc.

Table 2: Object of the Private Member's Bills Initiated by Women in the 13th Legislature

Object of the bill	Women (alone or in group)	Groups of men & women
Women/Gender issues	28	4
Justice/interior security	8	4
Institutional organisation/Public services	14	7
Health	7	4
Children/primary education	16	1
Research/University	3	0
Vulnerable groups *Senior and handicapped citizens, refugees, minorities, etc.*	10	2
Fundamental and citizens' rights	5	2
Dual nationality	5	0
Islam	0	2
Finance/economy	1	5
Miscellaneous	6	4
Total	103	35

Source: Own compilation with data from the Secretariat of the National Assembly of Pakistan

Moreover, no area of legislative action was left to men, and women have also been very active on all subjects. Indeed, while women constituted only 21% of the MNAs, more than half of the private member's bills introduced in the 13th legislature were supported only by women[13], thus showing a greater interest than men for the legislative role of the MPs. In the 12th legislature, too, women were more involved in parliamentary work. While they represented about one-fifth of the National Assembly, women asked 27% of the questions to the government, gave 30% of the *calling attention notices*, proposed 24% of the resolutions and 42% of the private member's bills (Mirza/Wagha 2010, 81). This suggests, using the concept of "parliamentary role", that women were more interested than men in being "policy makers" and "specialists". Furthermore, they often articulate these roles with reference to a "different work ethic" that they explicitly label as "feminine".

Claiming a feminine work ethic

When talking about the way they work, women MPs refer to their gender not as a source of discrimination, but as a source of additional force within the political system. Some of the qualities they claim as feminine are not surprising; women would be more caring, compassionate and human, such as it was expressed by this MNA: "There is human in every woman, which I think is the greatest characteristic that

you can have in politics" (MP10). Often, though not systematically, female MPs justify such qualities by referring to motherhood as a specifically feminine experience. But feminine qualities were not only defined vis-à-vis the gender roles assigned to women, as women were also presented as being more professional than men in many ways, from punctuality to attention to details. According to a female MNA,

> Women, generally speaking, do more of a detailed work on the issue (…), giving importance to even small small issues coming in our way, which men have a tendency to overlook. Women have the sort of power to follow that agenda, men do really show a bit of carelessness sometimes. (MP12)

As shown by the above quote, the valorization of women's qualities generally went hand in hand with the criticism of men's attitude. Men, because they pursue their personal interest and benefit from the political system, are accused of having no will to tackle corruption, violence and poverty, while women would. "Clientelism" and "feudalism" were the main objects of women's critics, as expressed by this very simple question from an MNA from MQM: "So what have they been doing for 60 years? Filling their bags (...)?" (MP9).[14] In that rhetoric, women as politically excluded ones have little responsibility in the current state of affairs (albeit one woman, Benazir Bhutto, has been Prime Minister twice in the recent history of Pakistan). They also have no interest in keeping "feudal" mechanism in the system alive. Such arguments can easily be countered by the fact that women MPs generally have a class-based interest in the preservation of the prevailing social and political system in Pakistan, since many of them are actually kin or allies of the men who have been ruling the country since 1947 (Dutoya 2012a, 496-498). However, using their gender identity, women attempt to place themselves beside those who are often called the "downtrodden" in Pakistan. This discourse is common to women coming from various parties and walks of life and contributes to a general set of behaviors and representations adopted and displayed by female MPs. To that extent, it can be observed that female parliamentarians propose a new representation of politics, which is explicitly gendered, as it is a politics made by women, acting as women and for women and the "other downtrodden". Moreover, this new way of doing politics is characterized by a focus on the nation and national issues, in opposition to what is commonly (and pejoratively) called "constituency politics" and presented as an election-oriented way of doing localized politics. In that respect, the discourse of this female MNA is exemplary:

> I have a constituency, my constituency is Pakistan, I'm very clear on that. (…) I think I'm one of the few people who are truly doing national politics, in terms of constituency national politics. There are leaders who say they are national leaders, but their emphasis is on one area. (…) That concept of Pakistani politics, it's just the constituencies, they will do anything to please their electorate, and then nothing beyond their electorate. There is no national in their politics. (MP28)

Yet these discourses are fraught with ambiguities, especially when looking more closely to the actual practices of female MPs, and their difficulties to actually construct and conduct action based on the solidarity between women.

Beyond discourses: the limits of "women's politics"

The concept of "women's politics" has two main limits. First, within Parliament female MPs mostly operate as party members, which is not always compatible with acting as women across party lines (e.g. as a caucus). Moreover, most of them have never been involved in the women's movement in Pakistan, have no desire to be associated with feminism and do not shy away from developing sexist attitudes and discourses towards other women.

The constraints of party politics

Most elected representatives in Pakistan belong to a political party, which can legitimately claim some degree of control over them. Yet, in the case of women "elected" on reserved seats, this control is said to be particularly strong, since these seats are allocated through party lists. For this reason, women are often accused of being the lackeys of party leaders, since they cannot rely on the direct vote of the people. Indeed, several MPs felt that their party had a tendency to be less attentive to their claims compared to those of directly elected MPs. For instance, they thought that they were the last to be accommodated when it came to the seats in the parliamentary standing committees. In addition to that, several MPs complained that their party had taken over (or tried to) the development funds allocated to them, on the ground that they have no territorial constituency.

Nevertheless, parties do not exert a total and homogenous control over women elected on reserved seats. First, most parties have a women's wing, in which all the leadership is obtained by women. The attitude towards these wings is mixed or even polarized. Some of their members argue that the women's wing has enabled them to be politically autonomous or at least to have a space of their own. But many (especially those who have responsibilities in those wings) complain that the women's wing is a space in which women can be marginalized, since the leadership of the wing is not recognized at par within the party. A good example of this ambivalence is the JI. In this party, there is little interference from the party in the women's wing, because of the norms of segregation. Thus women are able to take strong positions on women's issues, even if this is generally undermined because these positions do not conform to the agenda defended by other women's groups or the liberal media. On the other hand, if they are autonomous in their internal organization, they have little chance to be of great influence in the mainstream of the party, to which they lack access (in contrast to other parties, women in JI cannot belong to the mainstream party) unless through family networks (Siddiqui 2010).

In other parties as well, the ideology and the organizational structures impact on the status of women within the party. In parties such as MQM and ANP, the (relatively) secularist and socially progressive ideology seems more open to women's agency than in other parties. Yet, the ANP is dominant in a province in which very few women have been directly elected while the MQM has developed a very authoritarian party discipline, leaving little room for any MP's autonomy (Frotscher 2008, 171). Among the three bigger parties (the PPP and the two Muslim Leagues), the autonomy of female MPs seems to be first and foremost an issue of personality and personal resources.
Another feature to parties' power is the fact that women's political participation is considered as a major issue by women's groups, democracy promoting local NGOs, and international organizations and NGOs. Thus, cases of mishandling of women in legislative assemblies or parties are often noticed and criticized. For instance, when some (female) party workers were evinced from parties' lists in the favor of women who had less political credibility but better family connections, this was noted and criticized in the media (Arshad 2007, Yasin 2007). Thus, women get some protection from parties' arbitrary decisions. But this protection creates a counter obligation for women vis-à-vis civil society organizations, which generally goes by paying lip service to the defense of women's issues, while they might have little (if any) feminist beliefs.

Feminism as taboo

If many women MPs insist on "feminine qualities" while describing their approach to politics, they will generally shy away from calling themselves feminists and, for some, use sexist stereotyping. Indeed, the valorization of a "feminine" ethos goes hand in hand with the criticism of those who do not (or are considered not to) fit into the model of the "good, humane and respectable women", and thus the compliance with strict gender rules. For instance, an MNA from the PMLQ asserted that

> There are some women, many women, (…) who are not humane, who are ruthless as men (…). Politics is not a woman's world, and if you come, mature enough, with the idea of giving, you'll succeed much more, as you'll get much more satisfaction, but if you come with a bee in your bonnet that I've to become a minister tomorrow, then you can become a very ugly female. (MP10)

Moreover, a common reaction to sexist remarks is not to contest their validity, but to differentiate oneself from the behaviors which are attacked. For instance, many MPs do not refute the common stereotype of the futile women, but accuse their counterparts of being responsible for it. Hence an MNA belonging to MQM affirmed that many of her colleagues were just "dolls" (MP9) unable to take a serious interest in politics, while another Senator (MP4) considered that many female MPs would

rather talk about clothes than serious issues. Others consider that accusations against some MPs' moralities can be justified if these women do not behave properly:

> They should not come. They are always sitting with the men, and the men are talking about them. Even if they are not bad, (…) they become notorious without any reason. When ladies are above 40, then they should come in the politics. (MP22)

Thus, the image of solidarity between women that MPs often summon seems to be in many cases just an image. For instance, the creation of a women's caucus was wished by a vast majority of the MPs I met in 2008. Yet, after its creation, most MPs seemed circumspect towards its usefulness and many said they had little interest in actively participating in the caucus, even if most of them said they were official members. Of the 30 female MPs I interviewed, only one (MP3) labeled herself a feminist. Indeed, it is not common to call oneself a feminist in Pakistan including for women who actually struggle for women's rights (Dedebant 2003, 16). But apart from this contentious term, many MPs seemed reluctant to endorse women's collective action against masculine domination. Therein, the words of this MNA are quite representative:

> Don't consider men as adversaries, you are living in a patriarchal society, you're not considered as equal to men (…). It's more persuasion which is needed, and a gentle persuasion gets you much farther than acrimony and taking your clothes out. (MP10)

Hence, women MPs do not seem eager to endorse a feminist outlook. This should not be surprising as most of them had no record in that area. Moreover, this reluctance might also be explained by the fact that "women's politics" is implicitly considered as a second-rate politics, while men (and directly elected MPs) remain the "real politicians". To that extent, women's politics can seem as a rather little appealing option.

'Women's politics': Whose choice is it?

Pakistani female parliamentarians on reserved seats (and to some extent those elected on general seats) often refer to women as a group they ought to represent, and they do present bills and take positions that conspicuously aim at defending women's interests. Yet, as we have seen, this position is fraught with ambiguities, and in many respects, the behavior of women MPs is the response to the constraint they face as women elected through quotas.

'Strategic Essentialism' or zenana dabba?

First, if women invest in women's issues, they also claim that they don't want to limit themselves to those issues. Indeed, the female MPs I met in the scope of this study

routinely expressed their refusal to be cornered in the zenana dabba, that is the ladies' compartment.[15] In that respect, female parliamentarians often interpret the fact that they were oriented towards specific domains as proof of sexism and a way to undermine their legitimacy; for if they are women's representatives, they cannot be representatives of the "people". Indeed, though constituencies are by definition limited, directly elected MPs generally defend the idea that through an in-depth interaction with their constituents at the grass-root level, they develop a real sense of the people and their issues. Meanwhile, while women constitute in reality a vast proportion of the Pakistani population, they are defined as a vulnerable section, in need of the protection of the State, but not a source of legitimacy comparable to the "people", no matter how abstract this notion is (Dutoya 2012b, 143-145).

Moreover, in Pakistan and elsewhere, women's issues and the social sector are generally considered as less prestigious than other political fields such as defense, home affairs, finance, etc. Thus a female MNA (MP12), elected in 2002 and 2008 was convinced that the women were consciously given "unimportant committees" and kept out of "serious" committees, especially in the 12th legislature (2002-2007). In this legislature, women constituted 50% members of the Health Standing Committee[16], 72% of the members of the Women's Development Committee, but only 6% of the members of the Home and Defense Standing Committees. In the same period, only 12% of the seats of "major committees" were occupied by women, against 38% of the seats in "feminine" or "soft committees".[17] This did not reflect the choice of women, as many had asked for "major committees" but did not obtain them.[18] When it comes to allocating responsibilities, in the National Assembly, between one fifth and one fourth of the committees' chairmen were women, which matches the proportion of women within parliament.[19] But they had fewer opportunities in the Senate (only 11% of the chairpersons were women in 2009) and in committees common to both chambers. Finally, at the beginning of the 12th legislature, about 15% of the parliamentary secretaries[20] were women (UNDP 2005, 55).

The situation evolved in the 13th legislature. First, the new ruling party (the PPP) was keen to be seen as a promoter of women's rights, and consequently took action. For instance, Azra Pechucho, a directly elected MNA (and the sister of Asif Ali Zardari, the President of the Republic) was nominated chairperson of the Defense Committee. As she is by profession a medical practitioner, she would have felt more at ease heading the Health Committee but she felt that her nomination was sending a positive signal (MP42). Beyond this example, the composition of parliamentary committees in 2010-2011 shows a contrasting situation. Some sectors seem to be perceived as very masculine as the committees focusing on strategic regions (states and frontier regions, Kashmir, etc.) and industry are dominated by men. Conversely, some committees (and thus field of public policy) are, gauging by the proportion of women, defined as feminine (health, women, education, etc.). But after the implementation of a major constitutional reform in 2010, the process of devolution transferred the competence of many "feminine issues" to the provinces (Special Com-

mittee on Constitutional Reform 2010). Subsequently, some parliamentary standing committees were dissolved, and their members (mostly women) were dispatched in other committees, including those that were formally considered as masculine. This was for instance the case in health policy, which is now under the responsibility of provinces (Solberg 2010).
Yet, this reshuffle of seats which led to an apparent lessening of gendered stereotypes in the attribution of committees was a process from which women were excluded; indeed, in spite of various protests, there was no woman seated in the Special Committee appointed in 2009 to reach a consensus on the constitutional changes. Though this might be purely coincidental, the fact that no woman or member of religious minorities (two groups benefiting from reserved seats) was included in the committee is revealing, as the committee was explicitly designed to represent all political forces in Pakistan, defined here in terms of provinces and political parties. Thus, it remains difficult for a woman to be recognized as a major political actor and not (merely) a representative of her sex.

Women's politics as second-rate politics

Even though they rarely expressed it as such, many of the women I met complained about sexist practices. In particular, those who had entered parliament after the 2002 elections felt that they were not welcome in what used to be virtually a men-only area. For example, they experienced difficulties to get speaking-time during the sessions or in committees. By and large, most women considered that the situation had improved since, but they underlined that politics remained a male dominated field, while anyone who would spend time in Parliament (or in the parliamentary lodges, where the parliamentarians live during session) could not help noticing the fact that men are much more numerous than women and that all was not designed so that women could feel at ease working there.[21] Indeed the public sphere is generally segregated in Pakistan, including the political parties, though in most of them women can choose whether they want to work within the women's wings or the mainstream party. But due to the fact that gender segregation is a powerful social norm, many women, including politicians, do not always feel at ease working directly with men and might prefer working with women, without this being a "feminist" choice in the sense of a choice "inspired by the need for women's collective and conscious action".
Moreover, the choice of female parliamentarians must be understood in the specific prospect of reservations. As underlined by Drude Dahlerup (2006, 14), any quota system runs the risk of "creating" a class of female politicians who have little political legitimacy and are dependent on men. In the case of reserved seats in Pakistan, this dependency is strong, as those who benefit from them are not directly elected. Thus MPs elected indirectly on reserved seats, and especially women, are often criticized by other elected representatives (of both sexes) who look at them with some hostility:

> You see the women in parliament, (…) their husband is sitting on their side, the minister is there, the daughter is sitting on his side (…). The women are not playing any role, they only come to the assembly, sit and do nothing. Because they have no platform, no constituency, they don't know where to go; even they don't know the problem of the ladies also. (MP41)

For that reason, "women" can constitute an alternative constituency and give to these non-elected MPs another form of legitimacy. To that extent, it is not surprising that women who have a constituency seem to be less interested to act as women's representatives. Of the three directly elected MPs I met, only one considered women's issues as a major issue. The two others acknowledged that women might have specific concerns, yet they conspicuously emphasized that they had duties towards all their constituents, since they had been directly elected. Moreover, studies of parliamentary work have shown that they tended to behave much more like other directly elected MPs within Parliament, and did not take any specific interest in legislative work and abided by the model of the constituency delegate (Mirza/Wagha 2010, 92). Moreover, reserved seats and the feminization of politics are supported by various feminist organizations as well as other NGOs focusing on local development and democracy strengthening. Yet, the support of these organizations is generally conditioned by the fact that women should bring a difference to the political field, by being more dedicated, less corrupt and working on social issues. This appears clearly in the various reports produced by these organizations as well as in the media (Mirza/Wagha 2010; Bari 2009; Chaudhry 2002). Thus there is a clear incentive for women parliamentarians elected on reserved seats to present themselves as women's representatives, whose behavior is distinctively different from the typical behavior developed by other (and male) politicians. In that respect, the defense of national politics and the criticisms against patron/client relationships that were mentioned earlier are ways for women to defend themselves against attacks, and might not be sustained in the long term. For instance, in spite of their criticisms towards constituency politics, many women also confess the desire to have their own constituency, and some construct for themselves a "shadow constituency", and act "as if" they had been directly elected. That can be done by claiming a special relationship to a particular locality, in which the MP spends most of the development funds she receives from the government. This shadow constituency is generally a place they are familiar with; be it the locality from which their (paternal or marital) family hails or a place in which they presently live. For some, this constituency is perceived as a way to run as a general candidate in some future election, and to become a "real MP". Thus, even though they claim that they want to renew the political system, women MPs seem mostly eager to being included in that system.

Conclusion

Contrary to what can sometimes be heard, the feminization of the political landscape in Pakistan in the years 2000 was not without effects. First of all, women have become a familiar sight when discussing politics in the media, which might contribute in challenging dominant gender norms. This symbolic impact of quotas is obviously difficult to evaluate and investigate, but might be significant. Second, to not miss the opportunities of the reserved seats, parties had to find women to be potential candidates, and thus feminized themselves, which is not a minor outcome considering that parties are often considered as main gate-keepers when it comes to entering formal politics (Lovenduski/Norris 1993).

But these were not the only goals set for reserved seats; they were also supposed to contribute to the (positive) transformation of Pakistani politics, by bringing in new values, new ways of addressing issues and better work ethics. In that respect, this study shows that women MPs try to construct a positive image of femininity in politics, using their gender to differentiate themselves from former politicians, then portrayed as inefficient, corrupt and careless. But they also adopt some of the behaviors they denounce. This apparent contradiction can be resolved by taking into account that discourses about women's values are part of a broader strategy towards inclusion in the political field and in that respect, are not contradicting the adoption of dominant (and masculine) norms of behavior and repertoires of contention. Interestingly, the study of the impact of parity laws in France (stating that men and women's political representation should be equal) has shown quite similar results, in spite of important differences in terms of gender representations. Indeed, though early studies showed that after the parity law was passed women tended to use their gender as an alternative political resource. Such use of femininity then quickly ebbed, and women were swift to endorse more classical (and masculine) political representations (Lévêque 2005, 502).

While it may be argued that such strategies do not contribute to the bettering of the political system (but this is outside the scope of this article), it remains necessary to take them into account when discussing the impact of quotas. Indeed, quotas seem effective in lifting the barriers that women encounter when they wish to enter politics; they seem less efficient when it comes to effectively challenging dominant representations of politics as being, literally and symbolically, a masculine domain.

Notes

1 I wish to thank Claudia Derichs, Andrea Fleschenberg dos Ramos Pinéu and Gayatri Jai Singh Rathore as well as anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of this article and their comments which helped me improve this text. I keep an entire responsibility for its content.

2 Quotas were on and off since the 1930s. Until the fifties (and since the 1935 Government of India Act), women were generally elected through direct elections, sometimes by women-only colleges (as it was

the case in the 1950s in Punjab). Since then, it has been reserved seats filled by an indirect election or nomination. This type of quotas is thus different from both quotas of candidates and reserved constituencies. In 2000, a 33% women's quota was introduced in the newly created local governance system, which no longer exists (Bari 2010).

3 As it appears in Pervez Musharraf's autobiography (Musharraf 2006, 168) and in interviews with politicians who took part in this process (MP4, MP10).

4 Among others, age, class, religious (about 97% of Pakistanis are Muslims, belonging to various denominations) and 'ethnic' group have a critical impact on the status of women, which also differs in urban and rural areas.

5 Note on transcriptions: For Urdu words, I used the most common transcriptions (that can be found in the Anglophone press for instance) which generally do not account for longer vowels; purdah, zenana, etc. Similarly, for political parties, I kept the transcription used by the parties themselves.

6 This data was collected for a doctoral dissertation in political science which was completed in 2012. The interviews were semi-structured, most of them were held in English, and a few in Urdu. I have chosen here to preserve, when possible, the anonymity of the interviewees. Interviews with MPs are indicated by MP1,2,...,42 and with others by F1,2,...6.

7 Each provincial assembly designates a certain number of MPs, among them 17 are reserved for women. Practically it means that for the reserved seats, only those who belong to the specified categories can be candidates. The 17% quota also applied to provincial assemblies. Moreover, in 2000, a 33% women's quota was introduced in the newly created local governance system, which no longer exists (Bari 2010).

8 Degree from a religious college for the study of the Islamic religion.

9 This article does not cover the National Assembly elected in 2013.

10 As already mentioned, it was compulsory between 2002 and 2009 to be at least a graduate or have a religious (madrasa) degree, yet various scandals have revealed that several MPs had fake degrees.

11 MPs are supposed to declare their assets and source of income, but the information provided is very often considered as not reliable (some MPs declaring having no assets for instance).

12 This data was calculated using the directory of the 12th National Assembly, compiled by the NGO PILDAT (Pildat 2002).

13 188 private member's bills were introduced in the National Assembly between June 2008 and March 2013, of which 103 were introduced by women (alone or in groups), 35 by MPs of both sexes, and 50 by men. The list of the bills is available on the National Assembly of Pakistan's website: http://www.na.gov.pk/en/bills.php?type=2 (last access: 14/04/2013).

14 The critic did not aim only at men, but also at the ruling parties, and this MNA later made an allusion to Benazir Bhutto's poor results in terms of Pakistani development.

15 The zenana is an Urdu term that was used to designate the women's part of the house in purdah-observing families. It is now used to designate a women's only-space, but generally with a pejorative meaning.

16 The Pakistani parliament has a system of Standing Committees (generally attached to a Ministry) and other parliamentary committees (ad hoc committees, financial committees, etc.).

17 Catherine Achin (2005, 489) makes a distinction between committees dealing with sovereignty-related issues (finance, defense, etc.) and those dealing with soft issues. Here the "major" committees are those dealing with finance, defense, frontier and other "strategic" regions, foreign affairs, home affairs,

justice and legislation. In the "soft" or "feminine" domains, I included culture, youth, tourism, education, population welfare, health, and women's issues.

18 It should be noted that several men made a similar complaint, and they generally explained it by the fact that they lacked influence within the party. The allocation of parliamentary committees is generally a complex task for parties as they must arbitrate between different claims to accommodate all of their MPs. To that extent, it could very well be that since women MPs were politically less experienced, they did not have enough leverage within the party.

19 There were some changes depending on the period, this figure is based on data collected by the PNUD in 2003 (PNUD 2005, 55) and Farzana Bari in 2007 (Bari 2009, 110-113) and myself in 2009 (through the secretariat of the National Assembly).

20 Parliamentary secretaries are MPs in charge of ensuring the liaison between the Parliament and a Ministry.

21 This personal impression was later confirmed by discussions with (female) employees of the Parliament.

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"Talking Point(s)": What Singaporean Female Politicians Choose to Say in Parliament

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In January 2012, with the sudden resignation of the Speaker of the House because of an inappropriate affair he had had, a by-election was held in the Punggol East constituency. The following weeks since Mr Michael Palmer's resignation on Janu-