

Introduction for the Special Section

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The theme of the special section of this issue is “Gender and Political Leadership.” Given the improvement of women’s political representation and recent global upsurge in women’s political activism, this theme cannot be timelier. The global average of women’s legislative representation in lower houses has reached 23.8% (as of May 1 2018, Inter-Parliament Union) and women assumed the heads of governments/states in 17 countries as of January 1, 2017. East Asian countries and the US—on which this special section focuses extensively—have also made important progress. For instance, in 2016, Hilary Rodham Clinton became the first American woman to be nominated as a presidential candidate by a major political party. Although she lost the election, it is worth noting that she did win the popular vote.

In Northeastern Asian countries, South Korea and Taiwan elected women as heads of states in 2012 and 2016 respectively. Notably, South Korea’s Park Geun-hye and Taiwan’s Tsai Ing-wen received majority of the votes, having contested against competitive male candidates. Moreover, in the 2000s, the two countries introduced gender quota laws to

enhance women’s national legislative representation.

Japan, however, has not made much progress in terms of women’s political representation. In fact, only recently has the lack of adequate legislative representation for women drawn the attention of the Japanese public. Women’s organizations lobbied to sensitize the Japanese legislators and public about this issue, pushing for a gender quota legislation. After six years of lobbying, the Law to Promote Gender Equality in Politics was passed on May 16, 2018. This is a monumental achievement, especially since Japanese women were traditionally regarded as apolitical or politically disinterested citizens and the Abe government’s policy to promote the active participation of women in society did not include affirmative action for improving women’s political representation. This law can be regarded only as an unintended outcome of the current government’s policies on women’s participation in society.

However, these developments in political representation of women have not led to the safeguarding of women’s rights hand in hand. The relations between deeply entrenched

gender inequality and political representation of women in politics have long been unnoticed. It is the #MeToo movement that aimed to protest systemic gender discrimination and sexual violence that encouraged women across the globe to become active political agents. For example, an unprecedented number of women have stepped forward to run for office in the 2018 US election. Also, a majority of voters came to take sexual harassment more seriously.

In South Korea, young women had initiated a movement against gender-based discrimination and violence even before the initiation of the #MeToo movement in the US. They actively participated in public protests, demanding the impeachment of president Park in late 2016. The global reach of the #MeToo movement further empowered South Korean women to publicly share their experiences of harassment. Japanese women followed suit, and female journalists and women public officials made public the details of their harassment in the hands of powerful men, leading to the resignation of the harassers. These events caused significant public outrage.

Notably, these developments reinforced the patently feminist notion that the personal is political; they threw light on how gendered power cut across public and private spheres, effectively denouncing women's dignity and exploiting their sexuality. These details attest that the political sphere, and, by extension, the notion of political leadership, are based on masculine norms and male dominance.

The special section features articles that examine such gendered nature of political

leadership and policy-making. Two articles focus on the gendered aspects of the 2016 US presidential campaign and election. Another article analyzes the 2012 presidential election in South Korea. The section also features an article about the Abe government's policies to promote women's participation in the social and economic spheres.

Deckman's article entitled "Too Soft and Feminine: Masculinity and the Gender Gap in the 2016 US Presidential Election" examines how attitudes about masculinity influenced voters' choice, especially female voters' choice, during the 2016 US presidential election. Deckman shows that women voters constitute a diverse group and that their voting choices vary widely, typically influenced by factors such as partisanship, race, education, and their own perceptions of masculinity. Her statistical analysis proves that women who believed that society has become too soft and feminine were three times more likely to have voted for Donald Trump than women who did not hold such views. Even Trump's overtly sexist campaign did not discourage a strong cohort of conservative white women to cast their ballots for him. Citing this finding, Deckman concludes that even the highly influential #MeToo movement may not change the voting preferences of conservative white women who voted for Trump in the future elections.

Drawing on Kathleen Hall Jamieson's concept of the double bind, Dolan's article entitled "A Woman at the Top of the Ticket: The Role of Gender in the 2016 Presidential Election" analyzes the gender dynamics of

the election. Notably, the double bind concept refers to the fact that female candidates are typically required to walk a tightrope of gendered expectations by demonstrating sufficient masculinity and femininity on the campaign trail. Dolan argues that Trump used gender stereotypes as a weapon against Clinton: he critiqued her for being insufficiently masculine and insufficiently feminine, while, at the same time, exaggerating his own masculinity. The results of the election suggest that female candidates struggle to be considered on an equal footing with male candidates when contesting the most masculine office in the land: the US Presidency.

While these articles examine the factors associated with the electoral defeat of America's first female presidential candidate, Shin analyzes the factors associated with the election of South Korea's first female president. Entitled "Gender, Election Campaigns and the First Female President of South Korea," the article analyzes the gendered aspects of the political strategies employed by Park and her male opponent, Moon Jae-in, in their respective political campaigns. Shin argues that both Park and Moon mobilized widely accepted gender norms as core campaign strategies to expand their support bases beyond their partisan constituencies. At the same time, the candidates competed to prove their better suitability for the highly masculinized national leadership position. By capitalizing on her historically significant prospect of becoming South Korea's first female president, Park was able to present a positive

picture of women's political leadership. On the other hand, by emphasizing her as a filial daughter of a former national leader, she was able to present herself as a competent, likable, and sympathetic candidate.

Takeda's article entitled "Between Reproduction and Production: Womenomics and the Japanese Government's Approach to Women and Gender Policies" examines the Abe government's policies for promoting women's participation in the social and economic spheres. Since 2014, the Abe government's policies have been based on "womenomics," the idea that a nation's economic growth can be stimulated by increasing women's participation in the labor force. Drawing from what Ian Holliday calls the "productivist paradigm," Takeda argues that the Abe government's policy-making is very similar to the ways in which previous governments charted and implemented social and economic policies. The article concludes by suggesting that the productivist paradigm that characterizes the Abe government's policies concerning women's labor force participation might have a negative impact on gender equality at the workplace, largely due to the economic concerns of the Japanese state and the country's industries.

The special section also includes an interview with Mari Miura, a political science professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, who played a key role in the passage of the Law to Promote Gender Equality in Politics in Japan. The interview focuses on the significance and the possible impact of this law on Japanese politics and women's political representation. Miura calls the law

“the Gender Parity Law” with expectations that the law could trigger positive transformation in Japanese politics.

The articles in the special section emerged from the collaborative research activities undertaken by the Japanese and American Women Political Scientists Symposium (JAWS). The JAWS was established in 2000 by Karen O’Conner and Tokuko Ogai, with the help of several other scholars from Japan and the US, to promote scholarly exchange

between the two countries. In March 2017, members of the JAWS organized an international symposium titled “How Far Have We Come in Women’s Political Leadership?” at Ochanomizu University. This special section is organized based on the rich scholarly exchange at this symposium. My sincere and deep gratitude goes to the all contributors to the JAWS-Ochanomizu symposium.