Citizen Participation in Governance Through Representation: Issue of Gender in East Asia

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ABSTRACT

In the modern age, although East Asia represents some of the most successful economies such as Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and (now) China, the level of political and administrative development in the region remains controversial. One of the major indicators of such politico-administrative development is the extent of citizen participation in governance through various democratic means, including the formation and expression of public opinion, people's involvement in government decisions and deliberations, and direct representation of citizens in governing institutions. However, the direct representation of citizens is considered one of the most effective modes of participation in institutions such as legislature, cabinet, and bureaucracy. In this regard, although the representation of women in these governing institutions has gained global

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significance, it still remains relatively weak in most East Asian cases. This article evaluates the extent of such women's participation in governance through representation in East Asia, examines the major factors constraining this representation, and suggests remedial alternatives to improve the situation.

Key Words: Gender; Governance; Representation; East Asia.

INTRODUCTION

In line with the global trend toward democratization, the issue of citizen participation in governance has gained increasing significance in both practical politics and academic disciplines. The provision of such citizen participation in governance is essential for enhancing public confidence in governing institutions, formulating state policies based on people's needs, and receiving necessary feedback on people's reactions to such policies. There are various forms or modes of this citizen participation, including community-level involvement in decision-making, opportunity to vote for or against major policy mandates, use of informal means like the media to influence state policies, and direct representation of citizens in politics and administration. Among these major forms of citizen participation, while community-level participation basically occurs at the lower level of state power, means of electoral votes is relatively indirect, and expression of individual opinions through media is quite fragmented, such participation based on direct representation or involvement of citizens at various levels of power hierarchy is more concrete and effective.

However, one of the central concerns related to such citizen participation through representation is regarding which sections of the public are represented in governance. In this regard, it is emphasized that in democratic mode of governance, such representation must cover diverse groups irrespective of race, class, and gender.[1] Among these categories, in recent decades, the question of gender representation has emerged as a global issue with repercussion for countries all over the world. In fact, one of the basic features of the concept of "good governance" is related to gender, especially with regard to the equal participation and representation of women in decision-making and equal opportunity to realize their own well-being.[2] This greater significance of female participation and representation is not only due to the current process of modernization and democratization in different parts of the world, it is also due to the growing need for female workforce in both public and private sectors created by the globalization of production, consumption, and information.

In line with the above context, similar to countries in other regions, East Asian countries have recently undergone certain democratization process, encountered rapid pace of modernization, and embraced various forces of globalization. These factors have considerable implications for creating greater demand for citizen participation in governance, especially with regard to a call for more equal gender representation in various spheres of governing institutions. For studying gender representation in governance, what makes East Asian cases interesting is that although the region represents some of the most successful economies of the world—including Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and China—their unique economic modernization and political democratization have not necessarily replaced their traditional cultural norms and social power structures that often constrain such women's participation.[3] However, the representation of women in institutions such as the legislature, cabinet, civil service, and other professional public services, constitutes the primary indicators of the degree of democratization that has taken place in these countries.

This article attempts to explore this gender dimension of citizen participation in East Asian countries. More specifically, it covers the following components: (a) general significance of women's participation in governance through representation; (b) current status of women's representation in various spheres of governance in East Asian countries; (c) major constraints to such women's participation and representation in the region; (d) critical implications of this limited female representation in governance; and (e) policy measures that need to be adopted in this regard. References to other regions, including South and Southeast Asia, Western Europe, North America, Africa, and Latin America are also made in assessing the condition in East Asia. However, it should be pointed out that although generalizations regarding the extent of women's participation in East Asian governance are drawn, there are considerable cross-national variations within the region itself.

GROWING SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION: A GENERAL OVERVIEW

Internationally, although the obstacles to female representation in major domains of social power are often rooted in various cultures, religions, and civilizations, in different epochs, there emerged major historical phenomena, including the industrial revolution, the emergence of capitalism, the socialist revolution, and anti-colonial movements, which began to expand women's role and representation in education, politics, business, and bureaucracy in various regions of the world.[4] In recent decades, equality in gender representation has emerged worldwide as a basic dimension of democratic governance. It is mentioned that such representation in democracy is crucial to ensure the equal

rights of women as citizens, maintain the legitimacy of governance based on people's (including women's) trust, guarantee the realization of women's unique needs and preferences, and utilize the female talent pool as a valuable source of human resources.[5] Thus, there is a growing emphasis on women's participation and representation in political parties, legislative bodies, public agencies, trade unions, local institutions, and grassroots organizations in various regions.[6]

This global significance of female representation is quite evident in the emergence of various international legal measures to prevent gender discrimination and ensure women's equal rights and opportunities. Some of the major examples of such legal measures include the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958), the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1967), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979). These international conventions require all nations to ensure women's equal rights and representation, and eliminate various forms of discrimination based on gender, although in reality, the situation has not improved much in many cases.

The growing importance of women's representation is also obvious from the recent worldwide proliferation of gender-related publications, workshops, and conferences. While most social science periodicals frequently publish articles on gender, there are specialized journals that address mainly issues and problems related to gender. Some of the major journals dealing with women's issues, including participation and representation, include *Gender and Society, Gender and History, Gender and Education, Gender Issues, Gender Matters Quarterly, Journal of Gender Studies, Journal of Women and Aging, Journal of Women's History, Journal of Women and Religion, Women: A Cultural Review, Women and Politics, Women's Quarterly, Women and Language, Women and Work, Women and Environments, Women's Studies*, and so on. In addition, there are series of periodicals and magazines on gender published at the regional and national levels by academic institutions and non-government organizations. Except issues such as globalization and the environment, the question of gender has been one of the most widely discussed topics in the current age.

With regard to women's rights and representation in governance in various regions and countries, numerous debates and deliberations have taken place at various conferences. For instance, during the past three decades, the Public Service International has organized conferences on women's issues (e.g., equal opportunity, equal pay, trade unions, working hours, and health services) in Stockholm, Singapore, New York, Caracas, Harare, and Helsinki. However, the most recent and crucial event was the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995) that led to the adoption of a resolution titled

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. At this conference, the representatives from 189 countries recognized the problems of gender inequalities, emphasized women's equal rights and empowerment, and stressed the elimination of discrimination and violence against women.[7] During the 1990s, the number of conferences and workshops organized by government and non-government organizations multiplied in all regions of the world.

In order to implement various gender-related international conventions, laws, and resolutions like those mentioned above, there have emerged a series of institutions like the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, and so on. Beyond such institutions directly dealing with women's concerns, today the gender issues are in the agenda of all well known international bodies, including the International Labor Organization, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. In addition, most governments have national-level ministries, departments, commissions, and/or committees dealing with gender-related issues, including female participation and representation. There have also emerged an enormous number of NGOs at the national, regional, and international levels, which attempt to address gender problems by undertaking relevant programs and influencing major government policies.

This recent worldwide proliferation of such academic and practical initiatives, measures, and institutions mentioned above, indicates the growing global significance of gender representation. The importance of the issue also lies in the fact that despite all these ventures in favor of women's participation, representation, and emancipation, they remain largely under-represented in the public sector, business, employment, and income. It is observed that globally, women account for less than 6% of higher managerial positions, and earn 50–75% of men's wages.[8] Even in an advanced democracy like the US, women represent 10% of corporate official posts and only 2% of all the highest-paid positions.[9] Within the realm of governance, the global average of women's representation in all parliaments and ministries is still below 15%.[10] This dismal global scenario of women's representation certainly makes it a critical issue that deserves more serious consideration.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNANCE IN EAST ASIA: THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

After an overview of the global significance and scenario of women's representation, this section presents the status of women's participation and

representation in governance with reference to cases in East Asia, although examples of other regions and countries are used to compare and assess the situation. In this regard, the focus is mainly on representation in the major domains of governance, including the legislature and cabinet, ministerial and sub-ministerial positions, administrative services, and professional and technical jobs. With regard to women's representation in these domains, there are not only inter-regional variations among Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and South America, there are also cross-national variations among countries within Asia, including those in East Asia.

First, in terms of female representation in the legislature, the situation in East Asian countries is average in comparison with many countries in other regions. As the figures presented in Table 1 demonstrate, as a percentage of total legislative seats (upper and lower chambers combined), women occupy 21.8% in China, 20.8% in North Korea, 18.7% in Taiwan, 10.8% in Japan, and only 5.9% in South Korea. The situation in Japan, although better than countries like Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, and Singapore, it is still worse than developing countries like Argentina, Malaysia, Mexico, and Uganda. The levels of female representation in China, North Korea, and Taiwan are higher than most of such non-East Asian countries, but they are still lower than cases such as South Africa, Tanzania, and Vietnam.

Table 1. Percentage of legislative seats occupied by women.

Country	% of seats	Country	% of seats
Argentina	21.3	Nepal	7.9
Australia	25.4	New Zealand	30.8
Bangladesh	9.1	North Korea	20.8
Brazil	5.9	Singapore	6.5
Canada	23.6	South Africa	27.9
Chile	8.9	South Korea	5.9
China	21.8	Sweden	42.7
Germany	30.4	Taiwan	18.7
Indonesia	8.0	Tanzania	22.2
Japan	10.8	Uganda	17.8
Malaysia	14.5	Venezuela	9.7
Mexico	15.9	Vietnam	26.0

Sources: Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, *Women in Legislative Chambers: Asia-Pacific Region*, 2000 [http://www.capwip.org/participation/ womenchambers.html]; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2001*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Table 1 also shows that the percentage of representation in these three East Asian cases is much lower than those in Western countries like Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, and Sweden. Thus, in the legislature, female participation through representation remains average in East Asian countries except South Korea where the status of such representation is extremely poor and one of the lowest in the world.

Second, at the ministerial and subministerial levels, female representation in East Asian countries is mostly below average. According to the data presented in Table 2, of the total ministerial positions, the percentage of female representation is 6.1% in China, 5.9% in Japan, and 3.0% in South Korea. The situation in China is the best in East Asia—it is better than Asian countries with less than 5% female representation like India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philippines—but it is worse than other Asian, African, and Latin American cases such as Botswana, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, and Sri Lanka. The percentages of this ministerial-level female representation in East Asian countries look more disappointing if one compares them with developed nations like Australia, Canada, Sweden, and the US.

Table 2. Percentage of ministerial and sub-ministerial positions held by women.

Country	Ministerial (%)	Sub-ministerial (%)
Australia	14.7	25.9
Botswana	7.7	15.4
Canada	18.5	17.6
China	6.1	3.9
Colombia	12.5	22.6
Costa Rica	11.1	35.2
Guatemala	13.3	22.2
India	3.2	6.2
Indonesia	3.6	1.6
Japan	5.9	10.1
Malaysia	6.1	9.0
Pakistan	4.0	2.2
Philippines	4.5	25.3
South Korea	3.0	0.6
Sri Lanka	12.5	9.6
Sweden	38.1	27.3
USA	14.3	34.5
Zimbabwe	8.3	14.0

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1999*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

At the subministerial level, the female representation in East Asian countries (except Japan) is even worse compared with the ministerial level. The figures in Table 2 show that, of the total positions at the sub-ministerial level (deputy or assistant ministers, secretaries of state, permanent secretaries, government directors, and other equivalent posts), the percentage of female positions is 10.1% in Japan, 3.9% in China, and only 0.6% in South Korea. This subministerial-level representation of women in China is better than Pakistan and Indonesia, but it is worse than Asian cases like India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Even Japan's 10.1% female representation is lower than many cases in the developing world like the Philippines, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. It is certainly worse than developed nations such as Australia, Canada, Sweden, and so on. Thus, compared to the subministerial-level female representation in various developed and developing nations, the situation in East Asian countries looks quite dismal.

Third, in terms of female representation in administrative and managerial positions (including senior administrators, chief executives, and corporate managers), the average percentage of representation in East Asia as a whole is 12%, which is better than that in South Asia (8%), but much worse than that in Western Europe (26%), Eastern Europe (40%), South America (24%), Central America (29%), Southeast Asia (24%), and Southern Africa (23%).[11] Within East Asia, as Table 3 presents, the percentage of female administrators and managers is 11.6% in China, 8.9% in Japan, and 4.4% in South Korea, which are higher than India and Pakistan, but much lower than developed nations like Canada, Norway, Sweden, and the US as well as post-socialist states like Hungary and Romania. This situation in East Asia is also worse than many developing countries, including Chile, Colombia, South Africa, Swaziland, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. In fact, South Korea is one of the few worst cases in terms of female representation in administrative and managerial positions.

With regard to women's representation in professional and technical positions in East Asia, the figures in Table 3 show that the percentage of female employees in such jobs is 45.1% in China, 43.3% in Japan, and 31.9% in South Korea. These figures are higher than those in South Asian cases such as India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, but lower than those in African, Latin American, Eastern European, and Southeast Asian countries like Chile, Thailand, Philippines, South Africa, Swaziland, Romania, and Hungary. The situation in East Asian cases is also worse than most Western nations like Canada, Norway, Sweden, and so on. Thus, compared to other regions, female representation in professional and technical services in East Asia is average at best. Within East Asia itself, South Korea, once again, is the worst case in this regard.

Finally, the above dismal records of low-level women's representation in various spheres of public governance in East Asian countries, do not

Table 3. Percentage of administrative-managerial and professional-technical positions held by women.

Country	Administrative-managerial (%)	Professional-technical (%)
Canada	42	56.1
Chile	20.1	53.9
China	11.6	45.1
Colombia	31	44
Hungary	33.8	59.8
India	2.3	20.5
Japan	8.9	43.3
Norway	31.5	61.9
Pakistan	3.9	19.5
Philippines	32.8	64.1
Romania	28.2	54.5
South Africa	17.4	46.7
South Korea	4.4	31.9
Sri Lanka	16.2	19.4
Swaziland	25.7	60.3
Sweden	38.9	64.2
Thailand	21.8	52.4
USA	42.7	52.6

Source: UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

necessarily mean that they are well represented in the private sector, especially in higher positions. In the overall economy, covering both the public and private sectors, the rate of female employment as a percentage of male rate is 67% in Japan and 69% in South Korea, compared to over 80% in Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Ghana, Kenya, Jamaica, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and so on.[12] In terms of compensation in the public and private sectors, the level of income earned by female workers or employees is much lower than that of their male counterparts. On average, the male and female shares of earned income are respectively 61.9 and 38.1% in China, 63.4 and 36.6% in North Korea, 65.9 and 34.1% in Japan, and 70.8 and 29.2% in South Korea.

In the private sector alone, although in some East Asian cases, the rate of female employment is adequate in industries like textile, manufacturing, wholesale, finance, and services—which is often due to the region's need for cheap, flexible, and part-time female labor force—since the 1990s, especially after the Asian economic crisis, the demand for such female workers has declined due the closure and relocation of industries.[13] More importantly,

the female representation in higher managerial positions remains dismal in the private sector. For example, in Japan, there is a serious gender discrimination in the private sector under its two-track personnel system (managerial track and general track) found in large companies, which allows many companies to exclude women from managerial positions and has kept the overall female representation in such positions at less than 10%.[14]

In short, in East Asia, compared to male citizens, there are very low percentages of women represented in the governing institutions. In some East Asian countries, there are relatively low percentages of women employed in the overall economy, their incomes from jobs are much lower, and their percentages as unpaid family workers are much higher. Given these scenarios, it is not surprising that in the worldwide ranking of gender empowerment, the records of East Asian countries are not very impressive—the rank of China is 33, Japan 38, and South Korea 83.[15]

THE MAJOR FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE IN EAST ASIA

In the above section, the article has presented the status of women's participation in governance through representation in East Asian countries. It is clear from the discussion that the overall extent of female representation in the major realms of governance in East Asia is relatively low in relation to the situation in others regions, including Europe, Latin America, and North America. The East Asian situation is also worse than some African countries. There are diverse demographic, ideological, cultural, and political factors responsible for this weak female representation in the region. However, there are cross-national variations in such representation within the region, which are also caused by these factors. This section examines these major factors affecting the extent of female representation and participation in governance in East Asia.

First, there are *demographic factors* such as gender-based rates and levels of literacy and demand and supply of labor force, which have implications for female representation in governance. With regard to literacy, women are likely to be more represented in countries where they have greater access to education. In this regard, Kaku finds that in East Asia, the percentage of women in the workforce changes with the increases in their education level.[16] Although there are minimal gender gaps in terms of the rates of overall adult literacy and primary-level enrolment in East Asian countries—which is above 90% for both male and female population[17]—there are significant gaps in the tertiary-level education that is often required to get access to top positions in various governing institutions. According to the 1998 UNDP report, the

overall percentages of male and female populations enrolled at all levels combined, are respectively 99 and 77% in Japan, 70 and 62% in China, 78 and 66% in South Korea, and 75% for both (male and female) in North Korea.[18] However, at the tertiary level only, the enrollment percentages of male and female populations respectively are 44 and 36% in Japan, 82 and 52% in South Korea, and 7 and 4% in China.[19]

To a certain extent, this gender gap in higher education affects female representation in governance in these countries. In South Korea, the huge gender gap at the tertiary level is in line with its extremely low level of female representation in governance. Similarly, in Japan, the relatively moderate gender gap is in line with its better record of female representation in governance compared to that in South Korea. The Chinese case, however, seems to be incompatible with its best record of female representation in East Asia.[20] Furthermore, in the region as a whole, the ratio of women's representation in governance is much lower than their enrolment in education, which may be due to other causal factors discussed later in this section.

Another demographic factor affecting gender participation through representation in governance is the extent of labor shortage or labor surplus. It is because, in most cases, when there is labor shortage or less supply of labor in relation to market demand, it is more likely that the female labor force would be absorbed in the public and private sectors since the male workforce cannot satisfy the overall demand for labor. But when there is a labor surplus, often indicated by the unemployment rate, it is less likely that more women would be hired since male employment becomes the first priority in such a situation in male-dominated societies. In East Asia, between 1985 and 1999, the situation of unemployment worsened from 1.8 to 3.1% in China, 2.6 to 4.1% in Japan, and 2.4 to 5.6% in South Korea.[21] Compared to this general pattern of unemployment in the total labor force, the unemployment situation for the more highly educated labor force is much worse in East Asian countries. For example, during the period 1996–98, the unemployment rates for the secondary- and tertiary-level graduates were respectively 50 and 25.2% in Japan, and 52.4 and 19.5% in South Korea.[22] Given this adverse situation of unemployment, which implies a considerable labor surplus, it is unlikely that there can be any significant improvement in women work force in government organizations, especially when these countries are trying to downsize the public sector in recent years.

Second, in terms of *ideological perspectives*, East Asian countries are quite strong in their ideological inclinations, which have critical impacts on the level of female participation through representation, because certain ideological positions are more conducive to social equality (including gender equality) than others. Among these countries, while China and North Korea are socialist states emphasizing (at least officially) equality, Japan and South Korea hold

strong belief in capitalist economic growth. Experiences in other states and regions—including the former socialist states in Eastern Europe and the welfare states in Nordic countries with certain socialist orientations—demonstrate that such ideological practices are apparently conducive to greater female representation in government institutions in comparison with the situation in states following the capitalist growth model.[23] In the case of China, it has been pointed out that the communist party advocated gender equality, opposed gender-based discrimination, and adopted measures to reduce gender disparity.[24] Under the communist party, the All-China Women's Federation played a certain role in drafting rules and regulations in favor of women's status.[25] Thus, China with poorer economic conditions has broader female representation than that in Japan and South Korea.

In the case of Japan, the capitalist growth model adopted during the postwar period saw a serious gender gap in terms of representation in governance, which improved considerably due to the rise of pro-welfare view, liberal democracy, female education, and labor shortage. Thus, female representation in governance in Japan, although it remains worse than China, is better than that in South Korea. On the other hand, the capitalist growth model under authoritarian regimes in South Korea, which paid more attention to unilateral economic growth at the expense of democratic values such as gender equality, had adverse impacts on women's representation in governance. Although the expansion of export-led market forces created a greater need to absorb the female work force in South Korea, most female workers ended up in low-pay and low-status jobs[26] rather than high-ranking positions in the country's governing institutions. Thus, in certain domains of governance, the female representation in socialist North Korea (with poorer economic condition) is higher than that in capitalist South Korea (with better economic situation). However, the potential equalizing impact of the socialist state for greater female representation in North Korea has allegedly been weakened by its inclinations for Confucian values that give higher priorities to family ties and state-led loyalty.[27] Thus, despite its socialist state model, North Korea remains far behind China in terms of female representation and participation in governance.

Third, beyond ideology, there are *socio-cultural norms and outlooks* that have significant impacts on gender-related issues such as women's status and position in various realms of society, including the governing institutions. It is noted by the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) that the empowerment of women in terms of their decision-making positions is considerably affected by cultural stereotypes that exist in most societies. In the Asia-Pacific region, which covers East Asian countries, the major forms of cultural stereotypes include: (a) women's primary responsibility is to take care of family and children, and it is only their secondary obligation to get involved

in social and political institutions; (b) women do not have experience, and thus are not capable to assume leadership positions; (c) the public domain is mainly for men while the private household domain is for women; and (d) women's involvement in the public sphere (politics, administration, and business) should be an extension of their roles in the private family sphere.[28] Such gender stereotypes, which constrain women's representation and participation, are rooted in the social norms and cultural traditions in East Asian countries with some cross-national variations.

For Sechiyama Kaku, according to traditional social norms in China, South Korea, North Korea, and Taiwan, the most determining factor in human behavior is considered to be the family relations, which requires women to pay more attention to family issues rather than external organizational responsibilities.[29] The family structures based on these traditional norms prescribe that a woman usually moves from her parents' family to her husband's family, and thus, remains always subservient to families dominated by men. A major source of such role definition for women is the tradition of Confucianism, which assigns an inferior status to women within the gender-based division of labor in all East Asian cases, including China, Japan, Taiwan, and North and South Korea.[30] In addition, the traditional kinship system—which emphasizes male heredity and inheritance, and thus, discriminates against daughters—plays a certain role to prevent women from participating in political and administrative institutions in these East Asian cases.[31] However, there are some differences among these cases. For instance, unlike other East Asian countries, the traditional norms in Japan are much less rigid in confining women's role to family and allowing them to play a certain role outside the sphere of the private household.[32] On the other hand, Confucianism is more deep-rooted in North and South Korea than China and Taiwan, which, as discussed above, perhaps explains why female representation is much lower in North Korea than China despite their common socialist ideological background.

Fourth, the abovementioned socio-cultural norms related to gender have certain impacts on the *public perceptions and attitudes* towards the expected roles of women in various domains. In all societies, the perceived roles of women as wives, mothers, managers, politicians, and administrators have implications not only for the opportunities available for women to participate in governance, but also for the motivation of women themselves to do so.[33] It is because, such public perceptions created and sustained by gender-biased traditional norms, often perpetuate the mindset of women to accept their subordinate social positions as natural,[34] and discourage them to take active initiatives in expanding their representation in political and administrative institutions. It is reported by CAPWIP that in most Asia-Pacific countries, including those in East Asia, the general public expect women to consider

family affairs as their most essential duties, and aspire female leaders to possess exceptional qualities to simultaneously serve the constituencies and play the roles of wife and mother.[35] Many potential female leaders, who themselves are born and brought up with gender-biased norms and customs, are discouraged by these public perceptions and attitudes to actively join public institutions and pursue political and administrative professions.

However, one should not overlook the fact that East Asian countries have undergone intensive modernization since the 1950s, which has replaced some of the traditional values and attitudes affecting women's career choices. As Kaku suggests, the forces of modernization have broken down some of the traditional customs, family relations, and social structures in East Asian countries.[36] In the case of China, it is the emergence of modern Marxian thinking under the communist party emphasizing gender equality in major domains, which changed the old family traditions and gender relations based on Confucianism. However, the traditional values and outlooks still prevail in Chinese society. In North Korea, the practice of Marxian ideology hardly replaced the traditional values and attitudes related to gender. Similarly, in South Korea, the extensive economic modernization based on market principles has hardly replaced the gender-biased local customs and expectations. In the case of Japan, according to Kaku, the modernization effect has been moderate, because it did not extensively borrow modern Western beliefs, while adopting a new paternalistic view of family with a redefinition of woman as "good wife, wise mother." Amartya Sen mentions that although much progress has been made by Japan in gender equality in education, women still face inequality in higher-level jobs and occupations.[37] In most Asian cases, according to a recent survey of 1200 mothers from 22 cities, the general public still expect that a typical Asian woman should be a good wife, mother, manager, and mediator, although there are cross-national variations in such opinions.[38]

Finally, there are various *political parameters* in East Asian countries that affect women's representation and participation in governance. According to CAPWIP, some of these major political factors constraining women's representation include the lack of political will, the absence of a "critical mass" of women in politics, and the prevalence of the so-called "all boys network."[39] More specifically, it is often the case in East Asia that the government gives less priority to gender-related policies in comparison with economic, financial, and industrial policies.[40] As a result, women are widely represented at the middle- and lower-level positions, but under-represented at the top political and administrative positions. It is difficult to redress the situation without strong commitment of policy-makers to adopt effective measures for gender equality in all layers and domains of governance. This lack of commitment to gender equality is often perpetuated by another factor, i.e., the dominance of

men and the relative absence of women at the top decision-making levels. This in-built, male-dominated pattern of power structure weakens the potential for undertaking policies and strategies in favor of female representation in governance.[41] It is because, in adopting gender-related policy measures, the influence of women decision-makers is less effective due to their existing small number in decision-making positions.

In Asian societies, such male dominance also exists in major political parties, including the ruling parties. It is usually the case that the membership in political parties, especially at the higher echelons, are dominated by men, and women have minimal access to party resources, nominations, and campaign facilities to compete in national and local elections. The situation is perpetuated further by the prevalence of the abovementioned "all boys network", implying the existence of male-dominated political structure and culture that exclude women from participation and representation in politics and policy making. In the administrative domain, similar vested interests of male members or officials often constrain female participation and represen-tation in most Asian countries, including those in East Asia.

In the above discussion, it is analyzed that there are various demographic, ideological, normative, attitudinal, and political factors, which, in various degrees and combinations, account for the relatively low level of female representation and participation in major realms of governance in East Asian countries. Although there are cross-national differences in terms of which factors are more determining for gender issues in these countries, as examined earlier, in the region, the overall status of female representation is worst in South Korea. In comparison with many other countries, although the per capita income of Japan and South Korea is very high, the extent of women's representation in their governing institutions is quite dismal. Thus, as men-tioned earlier, most East Asian countries rank relatively low in the global index of gender empowerment.[42]

IMPLICATIONS, TRENDS, AND ALTERNATIVES

After examining the extent of female participation through representation in the major spheres of governance, including the legislatures, the cabinets, and the managerial and professional bureaucracies, this section of this article briefly explores the critical implications of the current lower level of female representation in East Asian countries. It also presents some of the recent gender-related initiatives undertaken by governments in the region, and suggests certain policy alternatives with a view to enhance female participation through representation.

Critical Implications

In terms of implications, the extent of female representation in governance has considerable political, economic, and administrative consequences. For instance, the relatively lower level women's representation in East Asian countries has critical impacts on democracy and state legitimacy. Although Japan has created a tradition of liberal democracy since the second world war, and South Korea and Taiwan have moved toward greater democracy, as discussed in the article, these countries do not have adequate female representation in their elected legislative and executive bodies. Since women usually constitute half of the total population, their relative absence in these institutions implies that the authenticity and credibility of these new democracies are in question. In addition, the lesser representation of female citizens has adverse consequence for the legitimacy of governance, because women's under-representation in the governing institutions is likely to weaken their confidence in these institutions, and the level of such confidence is one of the basic indicators of legitimacy.

There are also critical economic implications of lower female representation for East Asian countries. Since the education level of women has significantly improved, and they constitute a major portion of the talent pool in these countries, their relative under-representation in public sector organizations implies a considerable waste of human resources, and thus compromise of economic benefits. In this age of globalized competitive markets, the lesser participation of female talents at all levels of economic institutions, including public enterprises, is likely to undermine the competitiveness of East Asian economies. The male-dominated top management can be improved considerably by incorporating the female talent pool.

The lower level of female representation in East Asia also has adverse consequences for administrative agencies not only in terms of the above-mentioned under-representation of female talent pool in such agencies, but also in terms of gender-biased service delivery. More specifically, since there are very few women public servants at the top policy-making levels in East Asian countries, especially in South Korea and Japan, it is less likely that the allocation of resources, implementation of policies, and delivery of services would be in favor of female citizens. The male-dominated state bureaucracy may not adequately comprehend women's specific needs and problems—including special health care, child care, domestic violence, and so on—and serve them accordingly. In other words, without sufficient representation of women in administrative agencies, they may not be responsive enough to gender-related issues and concerns.

Current Trends

Despite the low female representation in governance creating the above critical implications for various issues in East Asian countries, some of the recent national and international initiatives and events have created certain prospects for a better status of such representation. For example, at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the Chinese and Japanese governments made specific commitments to undertake legal and institutional measures to improve women's education, expand their representation in political-administrative decisions, and reduce violence and discrimination against them.[43] Prior to this conference, China introduced the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests in 1992, which is considered quite conducive to greater women's rights and representation. More recently, the Chinese government has created the National Working Committee on Women and Children with an emphasis on adopting committees at the provincial and local levels.[44] The State Council also announced an initiative known as the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (1995–2000) in 1995.

In South Korea, the government adopted the Women's Development Act in 1995 to enhance women's social status, expand their career advancement, and end gender discrimination in education and employment. It has introduced a form of quota system (in terms of offering 3–5 extra points to female applicants) to increase women's representation and participation in the public service, including mid-level administrative and foreign services.[45] The target was to increase women's share in such government services to 20% by year 2000. The government also planned to significantly increase female recruits at the Police Academy, Taxation College, Railway Junior College, and other institutions educating and training the civil servants.[46] Similar measures for greater female participation were adopted for various state enterprises, government committees, information networks, and mass media. These indeed are bold initiatives undertaken by the South Korean government, which have good potential to expand women's participation and representation in governance.

Remedial Alternatives

Despite the abovementioned new legal and institutional measures undertaken for greater female representation in East Asian countries, the earlier analysis has demonstrated that such representation remains at best average in China, limited in Japan and North Korea, and poor in South Korea. This relatively weak female representation is caused by diverse demographic, ideological, sociocultural, and political factors discussed above. In this regard, therefore, it is necessary to intensify existing measures and adopt new ones for expanding the female representation in governance. These remedial measures

can encompass normative and attitudinal means, constitutional and legal provisions, and politico-administrative strategies. These are briefly explained below.

First, one of the major obstacles to women's participation in East Asian countries, especially in South and North Korea, is the continuing traditional norms and perceptions based on Confucian values, which tend to confine women's role largely to the private sphere of family life. Thus, there is a need for changing such norms and attitudes by adopting appropriate cultural, educational, and informational policies and programs. More specifically, East Asian countries may seriously consider redesigning the education curricula at various levels in order to reduce female stereotyping, teach the significance of gender representation and equality, and help students learn women's positive roles in nation-building, economic development, political process, and the public service.[47] Various media sources, including television, films, radio, and newspapers, can also be used as effective means to sensitize the policy-makers and administrators about the problem of gender inequality, motivate women to rethink their roles and assert themselves as equal partners in various governing institutions, and reinforce the public perception based on women's equal rights and representation.[48]

Second, it is necessary to adopt effective constitutional and legal provisions in favor of gender equality in various spheres of society, including governance. As mentioned above, China and South Korea have recently adopted the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests (1992) and the Women's Development Act (1995) respectively—they aim to reduce gender-related discrimination, violence, inequality, and under-representation. However, additional legal instruments need to be introduced to make these legislations effective. Because, as discussed in this article, China still has yet to claim adequate female representation in governance, and South Korea's record remains dismal in this regard. On the other hand, Japan and North Korea have to seriously consider similar legislations to enhance women's equal participation and representation.

Third, among all constitutional-legal measures, the most direct and concrete is the "affirmative action" in favor of women's representation in governing institutions. In East Asia, South Korea is the only country that has decided to practice some form of female quota in various administrative agencies or organizations (discussed above), although such quota does not cover political parties and institutions. Other East Asian countries have yet to introduce such a gender quota. There are many countries that have adopted this measure to enhance women's representation. Some of the major examples of such female quota in legislative and/or administrative institutions, include countries such as Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Hungary, Nepal, Poland, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda.[49]

East Asian countries should seriously consider this option to introduce such affirmative action in terms of female quotas in their legislatures, cabinets, administrative agencies, and professional services.

Finally, since women's representation in the legislative and executive bodies greatly depends on their representation in political parties, there is a need for the major political parties in East Asian countries to take appropriate initiatives to expand such party representation. In this regard, they may practice the above provision of female quota in political parties as well. This system of female quota in political parties does exist in cases such as Denmark, Germany, Norway, and Sweden.[50] These countries have some of the best world records in terms of female representation and participation in legislative and executive bodies. Thus, East Asian countries should explore the possibility of adopting this option. In addition, it is the political will or commitment of top leaders that remains most critical to adopt and implement all the above measures suggested for ending gender-based discrimination and expanding female representation and participation in various domains of governance.[51]

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