GLOBAL FEMINIST COLLABORATIONS AND THE CONCEPT OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

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Abstract: Violence against women in politics is increasingly recognized around the world as a significant barrier to women's political participation. This article maps how the concept emerged globally, arguing that it has multiple, parallel origins: efforts by locally elected women in Bolivia in the late 1990s to theorize their experiences as political harassment and violence against women; networking by elected women across Asia, with support from global actors, to map and condemn manifestations of violence against women in politics in the mid-2000s; and initiatives in Kenya to recognize and tackle electoral gender-based violence in the late 2000s. International actors began to link these debates in the late 2000s and early 2010s, collecting and analyzing testimonies from women to develop new frameworks and toolkits for identifying and addressing violence against women in politics. They also sought opportunities to embed these new understandings into existing normative and political frameworks. Arguing that concept formation plays a crucial role in global feminist politics, the article illustrates how feminist collaborations are essential for giving voice to women's experiences and mobilizing for change.

INTRODUCTION

Following rising reports of assault, intimidation, and abuse directed at politically active women, violence against women in politics is increasingly recognized around the world as a significant barrier to women's political participation. As international relations (IR) scholars and feminist activists both acknowledge, identifying and naming a problem is a crucial first step in mobilizing for change. While IR research is relatively agnostic as to the individual-or group-based nature of this definitional work, feminist praxis tends to view consciousness-raising as a largely collective enterprise.[1,2] In the case of violence against women in politics, feminist collaborations at and across the national, regional, and global levels have

been essential in defining the problem, mapping its manifestations, and developing solutions.

A broad and varied network of politicians, activists, practitioners, and academics has contributed in various ways to work on violence against women in politics.[3] Exploring the roots of this concept reveals multiple, parallel origins across the Global South, which together inspired initiatives by practitioners at the regional and global levels, who worked on the ground and with each other to raise awareness and devise interventions. Efforts to establish violence against women in politics as a global problem gained further momentum through prominent cases of political sexism and misogyny in the West, as well as the rise of the #MeToo movement. Despite some lingering ambiguities, collective feminist theorizing has led to growing awareness of this phenomenon in global politics, as well as its progressive anchoring in new and existing national and international normative frameworks.[4]

Concept Formation and Global Feminist Politics

A necessary first step in instigating political change involves naming a problem. These processes are not neutral, as not only are there multiple ways of representing an issue,[5] but some ways of framing a problem may be more successful than others in gaining broader support.[6] In research on international policy diffusion, the actors engaged in this interpretive work are known as norm entrepreneurs. They seek to promote new global standards of behavior, and "call attention to issues or even 'create' issues by using language that names, interprets, and dramatizes them."[7] Transnational advocacy networks are often crucial in developing and spreading these new concepts, bound together by shared values and dense exchanges of information.[8]

The lack of adequate language to describe women's experiences has long been noted by feminist activists, stretching at least as far back as Betty Friedan's discussion in *The Feminine Mystique* of the "problem with no name."[9] Structural inequalities tend to normalize these harms. As Robin L. West writes: "An injury uniquely sustained by a disempowered group will lack a name, a history, and in general a linguistic reality."[10] Discovering a language by which to interpret women's experiences is a vital step in developing a feminist consciousness, linking recognition of inequality or mistreatment to collective resolve to take action.[11]

The global campaign to end violence against women illustrates these dynamics. Prior to the late 1980s and early 1990s, activists around the world engaged in distinct campaigns to end specific practices, such as rape in the United States and Europe, female genital mutilation in Africa, and dowry death in India. As a result of growing global feminist organizing, however, new networks of activists began to connect these diverse manifestations as part of a broader overarching concept of

"violence against women."[12] This work led to an expansion of international human rights discourse to include violence occurring in the private sphere and to recognize more broadly that women's rights are human rights.[13]

PARALLEL ORIGINS IN THEORIZING SHARED EXPERIENCES

Global debates on violence against women in politics cannot be traced back to a single source. Rather, they appear to have emerged from three localized initiatives taking place in parallel across different parts of the global South: efforts by locally elected women in Bolivia in the late 1990s to theorize their experiences as "political harassment and violence against women;" networking by elected women across Asia, with support from global actors, to map and condemn manifestations of "violence against women in politics" in the mid-2000s; and initiatives in Kenya to recognize and tackle "electoral gender-based violence" in the late 2000s. Taking women's lived experiences as a shared starting point, these three campaigns named the problem in different ways, but overlapped in their concerns to condemn the use of violence as a method to deter women's political participation.

Bolivia: Political Harassment and Violence Against Women

Women in Bolivia first began to talk about political harassment and violence against women following the formation of the Association of Locally Elected Women of Bolivia (ACOBOL) in 1999. Soon after its creation, ACOBOL began receiving reports of violent incidents against female councilors and mayors. After realizing that the attacks were not isolated events, they began to systematize these reports and later, began to distribute surveys at ACOBOL meetings to gain a better sense of the manifestations and frequency of these acts.[14] In 2000, they organized a seminar with the Vice Minister of Gender Affairs and the Family with local councilwomen in the lower house of parliament, followed a few months later by a public hearing hosted by the Commission of Decentralization and Popular Participation.

In 2001, ACOBOL started working with a variety of state and civil society institutions to draft a national bill on political harassment and violence for reasons of gender. Drawing from the various cases they had received, ACOBOL took the first steps towards defining the problem and classifying its various forms.[15] The bill was discussed in parliament on several occasions in 2005 and 2006, and it was ultimately sent to a joint committee to resolve some technical issues. By 2007, the topic made it onto the agenda of the Tenth Regional Conference on Women in Quito, Ecuador, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The resulting Consensus of Quito contained the first international call to member states "to adopt legislative measures and institutional

reforms to prevent, sanction, and eradicate political and administrative harassment against women to accede to elected and appointed decision-making positions."[16]

In 2011 the campaign gained new life with support from women in parliament, the Vice Minister of Equality of Opportunities, an alliance of more than 15 women's organizations, and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). The bill was brought up again in the 2011-2012 session and reworked in light of the new Constitution approved in 2009. Key changes included expanding its remit to encompass women in all political-public functions, and not just elected women, and changing the language to focus on acts committed against women (rather than acts committed "for reasons of gender").[17] Passed in May 2012, the bill defines harassment and violence, establishes legal sanctions, and enumerates a series of factors that might magnify these penalties. Article Seven defines political harassment as "acts of pressure, persecution, harassment, or threats" and political violence as "physical, psychological, and sexual actions, behaviors, and/or aggressions" aimed at restricting the exercise of women's political rights. Article Eight contains a long and wide-ranging list of examples of harassment and violence, reflecting the inductive groundwork performed by ACOBOL.[18]

South Asia: Violence against Women in Politics

Discussions of violence against women in politics in South Asia began in 2006 as part of a project set up by South Asia Partnership (SAP) International, with financial support from Oxfam Novib. It was inspired by findings from a study conducted in 2003 on women's participation in governance in South Asia, which revealed widespread discrimination, exploitation, oppression, and violence against women in politics. The first gathering organized by the program was held in August 2006, with women involved in national and provincial level politics, as well as female activists, representatives of the media, and staff from SAP offices in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Based on the testimonies given, participants proposed that violence against women in politics was a problem present across South Asia, with female politicians enduring not only physical attacks but also mental trauma and other offenses to discourage them from entering or continuing in politics. Women faced this violence within and outside political parties, as well as in the home and in society at large.[19]

Subsequent regional conferences were organized in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Noting that many victims hesitated to speak openly about this problem, the 2007 conference in Kathmandu, Nepal sought to "break the silence on the culture of feminized violence in politics which till now remained invisible."[20] With financial support from a wide range of international actors, including the UN Development

Fund for Women (UNIFEM),[i] the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), participants elaborated a more extensive typology of different forms of psychological and physical violence faced by female politicians. The 2008 conference in Kathmandu, supported by Oxfam, UNFPA, CARE Nepal, and International IDEA, focused on laws and policies for reducing violence against women in politics, as well as on showcasing best practices from women politicians themselves. The work enumerated three types of violence—physical, sexual, and psychological—and produced the 2008 Kathmandu Declaration calling for zero tolerance for violence against women in politics.[21] The third conference, held in 2009 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, focused on the role of the media and on galvanizing regional and global action on this issue, identifying Article Seven and General Recommendations 12, 19, and 23 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as potential entry points for action.

SAP International continued this work over the next two years, seeking to disseminate its work across as well as beyond South Asia. In 2010, it published a handbook with definitions of 46 terms and concepts related to violence against women in politics. It adapted the language of the UN's 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women to define it as "any act/s of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women politicians, including threats of such actors, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."[22] SAP International concluded its work with a 2011 book containing a digest of case studies collected over the course of the project, featuring the testimonies of women in politics in five South Asian countries and Afghanistan.[23]

Kenya: Electoral Gender-Based Violence

The concept of electoral gender-based violence surfaced in Kenya in the late 2000s in connection with violence targeting female candidates and voters in the run-up and aftermath of the December 2007 elections. One case featured prominently in the media involved parliamentary candidate Flora Terah, who was nearly killed after being physically assaulted by a gang of five men hired by her political opponent. While not the first violent incident targeting a political woman, Terah was visited in the hospital by politicians, activists, and even the U.S. ambassador, and the case was covered extensively by both local and global media outlets.[24] Following the attack, an Electoral Gender Based Violence Rapid Response Unit

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[i] In 2010, the UN General Assembly merged four organizations, including UNIFEM, to create the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

was set up by the Education Centre for Women in Democracy, with support from UNIFEM, to assist survivors in gaining medical attention and trauma counseling, as well as with referring their cases to the police and the Electoral Commission of Kenya. The UNIFEM director pledged to support female candidates by organizing trainings on personal security. Women in the media contributed by publishing testimonies of women candidates who had been attacked.[25] In early 2008, Terah launched a campaign against electoral gender-based violence, Terah against Terror, taking a caravan across the country to raise awareness.

A Commission of Inquiry on Post-Election Violence established following the elections noted that women and children were most at risk and affected by sexual violence, loss of property, and displacement. Enlisting the assistance of UNIFEM and UNFPA, as well as local organizations like the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya, CARE Kenya, and the Center for Rights Education and Awareness, the Commission devoted a chapter of its report to victims of post-election sexual violence. A report by the Independent Review Commission examined conduct during the election itself and observed that a common feature of the elections had been the use of sexist tactics and violence to keep women out of the race,[26] with violence during party nominations being a key reason that there were few women candidates.[27] The Elections Act of 2011, consolidating existing electoral laws into one piece of legislation, prohibited threatening and abusive language and actions including those on the grounds of gender. These developments influenced preparations for the 2013 elections, which included a dedicated SMS hotline set up by FIDA Kenya for both victims and witnesses to report cases of violence against women in elections, forwarded to the closest police station for response and, where relevant, with offers for legal aid.

These interventions were strengthened ahead of the 2017 elections. In addition to reviving its hotline, FIDA Kenya trained police officers in five counties on how to handle gender-based violence during the elections.[28] The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in partnership with UN Women and the Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence against Women, with financial support from United Kingdom Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, the European Union, and the governments of Ireland and Italy, published a pocket-sized booklet distributed to 180,000 polling agents.[29] It defines electoral gender-based violence as gender-based violence to achieve political gain, taking sexual, physical, emotional, mental, social, and economic forms. Stating that electoral gender-based violence is a human rights issue, it cites applicable laws on elections, electoral offenses, sexual offenses, criminal procedure, and domestic violence. The pamphlet also outlines what security agents, citizens, and victims should do when faced with electoral gender-based

violence and provides contacts for helplines, legal services, rescue shelters, and medical and trauma services.[30] Various UN agencies and civil society organizations also came together to collect data and case studies, with a number of programming guides now in development.[31]

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS IN FORGING A TRANSNATIONAL CONCEPT

The inductive theorizing done by actors in these three contexts did not immediately translate into a global campaign, but instead planted important seeds subsequently taken up by a wide range of international practitioners, who in the late 2000s and early 2010s actively worked to craft the concept of violence against women in politics as a broader global phenomenon. For many, this work grew out of prior programming on women's political participation, which had expanded rapidly in the 1990s and 2000s following increased international calls to promote gender-balanced decision-making.[32] These efforts coincided, fortuitously, with a series of other developments contributing to greater awareness of the issue as a global problem, including new platforms for women to speak out about their experiences.

International Practitioner Initiatives

The first cross-regional exchange on this topic appears to be the e-discussion on "Eliminating Violence against Women in Politics" that was organized in December 2007 by iKNOW Politics, a joint project of International IDEA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), NDI, UNDP, and UNIFEM (now UN Women). The opening message of the forum explains that "Violence or the threat of violence has been identified by members of the iKNOW Politics community – as well as through global and regional meetings of women politicians and their supporters sponsored by iKNOW partner organizations – as a significant impediment to women's political participation." To strengthen the knowledge base on violence against women in politics, the moderators requested information on the dimensions, frequency, and sources of violence; the distinction between violence targeting women because of their gender versus their political affiliations/ideologies; and the measures that might be put in place to tackle this violence. Developments in Bolivia, South Asia, and Kenya were all explicitly mentioned in the discussion, along with examples from other countries like Ecuador and Iraq. The iKNOW Politics team concluded that, despite a fair amount of press coverage of specific cases of violence, very little research or policy work had to date been conducted.[33]

Although the topic surfaced in work that various international practitioners were doing at the time on women's political participation, one of the first organi-

zations to address it systematically was the IPU.[ii] Since 2006, the IPU had been supporting parliaments in developing policies to combat violence against women. At the same time, it began conducting survey research with male and female parliamentarians, exploring how to attain greater gender equality in politics and make parliaments more gender-sensitive. The latter inspired the IPU's subsequent work on gender-sensitive parliaments, analyzing the gendered dynamics of parliament as a workplace. Published in 2011, its *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments* report indicated ongoing challenges faced by women, including problems with sexual harassment.[34] A Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments adopted in 2012 in Quebec, Canada, called on parliaments to take steps to foster "a work culture free of discrimination and harassment."[35]

In parallel developments, the IPU organized a side event on gender and electoral violence at the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings in March 2011. In April, the IPU Assembly adopted a resolution on electoral violence in Panama City, Panama, which included paragraphs expressing concern that female voters and candidates were "deterred from participating in the political process by a climate of intimidation" and observing that "gender-based electoral violence occurs prior to, during, and after elections and includes physical violence and verbal abuse."[36] From 2014 onwards, the IPU's annual reports on progress and setbacks in women's parliamentary representation have included a number of paragraphs on violence. The first report to do so, on elections that had taken place in 2013, noted that gender-based electoral and political violence was receiving greater attention and offered examples from Kenya, Honduras, and Italy.[37]

These trends led the IPU to carry out a consultative process with women parliamentarians in 2014 and 2015, with the idea of carrying out a survey to capture these experiences. The resulting issues brief, published in October 2016, showed that psychological, physical, sexual, and economic violence against women in parliaments was widespread.[38] To coincide with its publication, the IPU Assembly approved a resolution noting that "the increasing inclusion of women in political processes around the world has been accompanied by forms of resistance such as stereotyping, harassment, intimidation, and violence," such that "the specific forms of violence women face constitute an additional obstacle to their engagement in politics that can inhibit their freedom to exercise their mandate as they would wish."[39] The findings of the 2016 research were largely replicated in a subsequent study conducted in collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, published in 2018. The data further showed that younger women, as well as members of parliamentary staff, suffered from exceptionally high levels of violence and harassment. These acts were highly under-reported, at least partly

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[ii] The information that follows draws extensively on interviews with author via Skype, 27 February and 11 March 2019.

because most parliaments lacked mechanisms to register complaints.[40]

These issues began to be taken up within the global UN system in late 2010. In a report on women's participation in peacebuilding, the UN Secretary-General called for "vulnerability mapping to assess potential violence facing women (as voters, party workers and candidates), as well as action to prevent and respond to such threats."[41] In early 2011, UN Women organized a high-level meeting to update UN General Assembly resolution 58/142 on women and political partici-pation, which had been adopted in 2003. The new resolution 66/130, approved by member states in December 2011, urged states "To investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for political office, create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences and, to ensure accountability, take all appropriate steps to prosecute those responsible."[42] Two years later, the UN Secretary-General's report on progress made on 66/130 expanded this discussion to observe that violence against women in political life prevents women from exercising their political rights. Acknowledging that recog-nition of such violence was new, the Secretary-General argued for data and evi-dence to be collected to prevent violence and hold perpetrators accountable. One year later, UN Women published a study done in collaboration with the Centre for Social Research in New Delhi on violence against women in politics in India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Citing the work of SAP International, this work provided data on the nature, extent, motives, and effects of this violence.[43]

Intersecting with these developments was an initiative at UNDP to develop a handbook on gender and electoral violence. The project began to coalesce in early 2011, after a participant in the CSW panel organized by the IPU afterward attended a joint EU-UNDP meeting on electoral violence where there was no dis-cussion of gender at all. However, the project encountered challenges in framing the concept, namely, whether to add a gender lens to existing tools designed to prevent and mitigate electoral violence, or alternatively, to expand existing violence against women frameworks to political and electoral arenas. After the person moved to UN Women in 2012, the work became a joint UNDP/UN Women initiative and—with input from UN Women staff—took on a stronger violence against women angle. As a result, the preferred terminology began to evolve from "electoral violence against women" to "violence against women in elections."[44] This language appeared in the 2015 UNDP publication, *Inclusive Electoral Processes*, which identified four types of violence: psychological, physical, sexual, and economic.[45] The original project from 2011 was ultimately published in 2017 as a programming guide for tackling violence against women in elections.[46]

Inspired by conversations at UNDP, in 2011 the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) decided to revisit data collected in six countries between

2006 and 2010 through its citizen-monitoring initiative, the Electoral Violence Education and Resolution Program. Focusing on three types of violence—physical, economic, and social-psychological—the research noted significant gender differences in the types of violence experienced by women and men.[47] IFES did not take up the issue again, however, until 2014. Similar clashes over terminology occurred. Electoral violence experts preferred "electoral violence against women," which would add women to existing election security frameworks. In contrast, the gender team favored "violence against women in elections," which would center more expansive feminist definitions of violence as well as the survivors of gender-based violence. To better articulate the issue in its work, in August 2016 IFES launched a Violence against Women in Elections Assessment Tool. Its recent work has focused on revising this framework, as well as expanding it to examine the problem of online violence against women in politics.[48]

During this same period, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) began fielding numerous requests about political harassment and violence. This led CIM to convene a hemispheric expert group meeting in February 2015 to exchange information on the Bolivian experience as well as on ongoing legislative efforts in other Latin American countries. Based on these discussions, CIM worked on a Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence against Women, which was approved by state-parties to the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention) at the conference of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention in Lima, Peru, in October 2015. Applying the Convention's definition of violence against women as acts causing "death or physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women," the Declaration called for the adoption of mechanisms and measures, collection of data, introduction of victim services, awareness raising campaigns, and development of media codes of conduct.[49] To assist countries in developing legislation to this end, CIM subsequently carried out regional consultations to produce an Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life, published in 2017.[50] Points of contention in these debates revolved primarily around the language of "violence" versus "harassment," as well as "violence against women" versus "for reasons of gender."[51]

The work of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of ParlAmericas, an institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system, intersected with and complemented these efforts. At its annual hemispheric conference in 2014, a Peruvian participant on a panel discussing barriers to gender equality in politics shared her work with a network of locally elected women to pass a bill on political harassment. The contribution resonated strongly with the audience,

leading the Group to recommend focusing exclusively on this issue during its 2015 meeting, which was also attended by colleagues from NDI, UN Women, and CIM. To facilitate the sharing of experiences beyond the meeting, staff at ParlAmericas began filming testimonies from political women across the Americas, posted on its website as a means to map violence against women in politics across the region.[52] In 2016, ParlAmericas held a special event in Saint Lucia for women parliamentarians from the Anglophone Caribbean, where these debates were less advanced than in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America.[53]

Around 2012, NDI began informally collecting stories about women's experiences with harassment and violence during elections. Over the next two years, the need to develop a more systematic approach to data collection became increasingly evident.[54] In 2015, the gender team launched the Votes without Violence project to "gender" NDI's work on electoral violence and the democratic quality of elections by training key stakeholders to detect early warning signs and acts of violence against women in elections. As the project was piloted across several countries in Africa and Latin America, the team expanded its original typology—adding economic violence, for example—to better reflect realities on the ground.[55] The cross-regional nature of this work inspired NDI to pursue the idea of creating a global framework for conceptualizing, raising awareness, and devising solutions to tackle violence against women in politics. In December 2015, it convened a workshop with practitioners, politicians, and academics to consider how to best frame the case for change. In March 2016, NDI launched the #NotTheCost campaign with a global call to action, arguing that violence should not be the price women have to pay to in order to participate in politics.[56] To give voice to—and draw connections across—women's experiences, the event featured testimonies from female politicians and activists from around the world.

Following this event, NDI developed a suite of tools to address different locations and aspects of this phenomenon. The first involved a program guidance publication, which sought to clarify how violence against women in politics was distinct from political violence affecting both women and men. Drawing on global debates, it proposed that violence against women in politics targets women because of their gender, that its forms can be gendered, and that its impact is to discourage women in particular from being or becoming politically active.[57] Subsequent projects focused on violence against women in political parties, online violence against women including state-based gendered disinformation, and individual safety planning. Partnering with Liberal International, NDI has submitted written statements on violence against women in politics to the UN Human Rights Council every year since 2016.[58] From 2016 onwards, NDI also played a vital role in lobbying the UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women to take up the issue, contributing

centrally to her report to the UN General Assembly in 2018.

A variety of other international practitioners have also generated knowledge and raised awareness. UNDP and UN Habitat funded a series of studies in 2010 and 2011 on political harassment and violence against women, focusing on individual countries in Latin America.[59] In 2013, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung published a collection of case studies of harassment against women in politics in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama.[60] Between 2014 and 2017, International IDEA and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy collaborated on a project on women's political rights in Colombia, Kenya, and Tunisia, which included a prominent focus on violence against women in politics.[61] In 2018, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, in partnership with the UK political parties, hosted an international summit to address violence against women in politics, with more than 50 speakers from over 20 countries.

Sexism and Misogyny in Western Politics

Although theorized largely in the context of women's experiences in the global South, a series of highly publicized incidents across the West have solidified recognition of violence against women in politics as a truly global phenomenon. One was the famous "misogyny speech" given by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2012, highlighting the sexist attitudes and behaviors of Tony Abbott, the leader of the opposition. In addition to going viral online and reaching audiences around the globe, the speech opened up more explicit conversations about sexism in Australian politics that continue through today.[62] In 2013 and 2014, sexist and racist attacks in Italy against Laura Boldrini, president of the Chamber of Deputies, and Cécile Kyenge, the first black cabinet minister, also gained widespread attention in the global media.

Events in 2016, however, created the greatest breakthrough in awareness. In May, sexual harassment allegations against Vice President of the French National Assembly, Denis Baupin, sparked a still ongoing conversation on problems of sexual harassment and violence in French politics. In June, the murder of Jo Cox, a member of the British parliament, stunned the world and led to elevated attention to abuse and intimidation in British public life. The 2016 presidential elections in the United States perhaps left the strongest impression, with sexism and misogyny being a defining feature of the contested Democratic primary as well as the election campaign itself. One indication of this growing awareness is the fact that female parliamentarians from Europe were the first to approach the IPU to conduct a regional study on violence against women in parliament. Its findings inspired women in the Party of European Socialists to organize a day-long confer-

ence on violence against women in politics in Lisbon in December 2018.

#MeToo and the Political Sphere

These developments coincided with the rise of the global #MeToo movement in October 2017, which drew attention to problems of sexual harassment in all fields, including politics. Almost immediately after allegations surfaced against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, more than 140 women in California politics started the #WeSaidEnough campaign to denounce widespread sexual harassment against (and by) lawmakers, aides, and lobbyists. In the British parliament, a number of male cabinet ministers and parliamentarians resigned or were suspended from their parties, prompting debates in parliament as well as in Labour Party about the need to reform (or create for the first time) policies and processes to handle claims regarding sexual harassment.[63] In February 2018, #MeToo scandals also hit the Canadian parliament, prompting discussions on revamping procedures and training requirements, and inspiring organizations like the Young Women's Leadership Network to conduct research and develop a guide for preventing and responding to sexual violence in political institutions.[64] In early 2019, #MeTooEP, a network seeking to address problems of sexual harassment at the European Parliament, launched a drive to secure a pledge from members to actively combat sexual harassment and institute mandatory anti-harassment training.[65]

Toward the Consolidation of the Concept

This collective feminist theorizing and mobilization has created a new vocabulary for women around the globe to interpret and articulate their experiences in the political world. These collaborations have, in turn, resulted in increased recognition of the concept of violence against women in politics within a growing number of global normative frameworks, including a series of recent advances across the UN system. Notably, these documents not only embed definitions, typologies, and calls to action emerging from these diverse conversations. They also institutionalize transformative feminist approaches to these questions, applying a "violence against women" frame to expand traditional understandings of political violence, rather than simply adding women into more conventional (and narrow) conceptualizations.

One entry point has been through the CEDAW infrastructure. Violence against women in politics has been included in a growing number of Concluding Observations made by the CEDAW Committee as it has reviewed various country reports. Since 2015, four—Bolivia in 2015, Honduras in 2016, Costa Rica in 2017, and Italy in 2017—have taken up this issue in connection to Article Seven on political and public life and recommended passage or more effective implementation

of legislation to combat political harassment and violence against women.[66] The concept also appears in General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, adopted in July 2017 to update General Recommendation No. 19 from 1992. Paragraph 14 defining gender-based violence states that "Harmful practices and crimes against women human rights defenders, politicians, activists, or journalists are also forms of gender-based violence against women." Paragraph 20 notes that such violence may occur in "in all spaces and spheres of human interaction, whether public or private, including…politics."[67]

A second mode of institutionalization has occurred via the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, who announced in 2016 that she would take up the topic of violence against women in politics. In March 2018, the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and UN Women convened a meeting in New York to support her mandate, bringing together more than 40 experts, including politicians, academics, gender equality advocates, representatives from regional human and women's rights monitoring mechanisms, electoral management bodies, and various UN agencies.[68] The Special Rapporteur's report to the UN General Assembly in October 2018 captured the collective contributions of the many actors who have participated in these debates over the last several years. The section on violence against women in parliaments included references to data collection and interventions developed by the IPU and NDI; the section on violence against women in elections pointed to the work of UN Women, UNDP, SAP International, International IDEA, FIDA Kenya, and IFES; and the section on interventions mentioned CIM's model law. The report pushes these debates one step further, however, by highlighting other global and regional frameworks that might be mobilized in support of this work, including CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the Maputo Protocol.[69]

A third pathway has been through efforts at the UN to provide a response to the global conversations initiated by the #MeToo movement. In December 2018, member states approved General Assembly resolution 73/148, linking sexual harassment to efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The resolution's preamble expressed deep concerns about "all acts of violence, including sexual harassment, against women and girls involved in political and public life, including women in leadership positions, journalists and other media workers, and human rights defenders." Paragraph 7, in turn, encouraged national parliaments and political parties "to adopt codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones, stating zero tolerance by these legislative authorities and political parties for sexual harassment, intimidation, and any other form of violence against women in politics."[70] Recognition of this concept in these global documents has been a collective achievement, giving a name to women's

experiences, and in so doing, contributing to the ongoing advancement of democracy, human rights, and gender equality. ♔

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Notes

[1] Annika Björkdahl, "From Idea to Norm: Promoting Conflict Prevention" (PhD diss., Lund University, 2002).

[2] Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness Raising: A Radical Weapon," *Feminist Revolution* (1978), 144.

[3] Mona Lena Krook, "Violence against Women in Politics," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017), 74-88.

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