

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF “KYIV-MOHYLA ACADEMY”

Faculty of Social Sciences and Social Technologies

Department of International Relations

**WOMEN REPRESENTATION AT THE PARLIAMENT OF JAPAN:  
CHANGES THROUGH THE LENS OF LIBERAL AND POSTMODERN  
FEMINISM**

Thesis on International Relations

Author:

Student of the fourth year of study

Kolida Kateryna Grygorivna

Supervisor:

Senior Lecturer,

Candidate of Sciences Olena Mykal

KYIV – 2023

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	3
<b>CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	
1.1 Feminist Political Theory: Liberal and Postmodernist Outlook.....	8
1.2 Research through terms: glass ceiling, <i>gaiatsu</i> , gendering of policy and other definitions.....	12
<b>CHAPTER II. ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY: INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC INITIATIVES</b>	
2.1 International documents and their influence on women at the parliament of Japan...	15
2.2 State-initiated legislation for women’s representation.....	19
<b>CHAPTER III. A COMPARISON OF LIBERAL AND POSTMODERN FEMINIST VIEWS</b>	
3.1 Liberal feminism: Quotas on women in politics and whether they change anything...	25
3.2 Postmodern feminism and a gender-free view on the underrepresentation of women.....	29
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	33
<b>List of used sources and literature</b> .....	36
<b>Addition</b> .....	40
<b>Abstract</b> .....	41

## INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality has been a persistent issue in many societies, including Japan, where women have historically been underrepresented in politics. Underrepresentation is a serious issue that affects women in various aspects of their lives, including their participation in political processes. Despite being one of the world's most advanced economies and a leading democratic nation, Japan lags behind many other countries in terms of gender equality.

Gender stereotypes and cultural norms play a significant role in perpetuating gender inequality in Japan. Japan is a country that has a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture, which has created systemic barriers for women in various fields. In the field of politics, Japan has historically been dominated by men, and there is a perception that women are not suited to such job. Moreover, Japan's political culture is hierarchical and emphasizes conformity, making it difficult for women to advance their careers. This is particularly evident at the Parliament of Japan, which is notorious for being a male-dominated hierarchical organization. The gender issue in politics has raised concerns over the need for more inclusive policies that promote gender equality and increase women's representation.

Theories are commonly used in order to understand specific issues and how they can be fixed. In the case of gender inequality at the Parliament, I focus on explanation of that issue, using feminist political theory. Furthermore, I define it from the point of view of two frameworks in order to get a more complete picture.

The **aim** of this paper is to define the changes of women representation at the parliament of Japan after the implementation of international and domestic policies by using two frameworks of feminist political theory – liberal and postmodern. **Chronological borders** of my research are from 1990 to 2022.

To achieve the aim of my research, I will highlight the main **tasks**:

1. define feminist political theory and its main principles through liberal and postmodernist point of views for the research of gender inequality
2. explain the terminology related to the research of gender inequality
3. summarize international and domestic policies to increase women's political representation in Japan
4. examine gender inequality issue at the Parliament through prism of liberal and postmodernist frameworks

In terms of **theory**, I will use *feminist political theory*. I will also divide theory into two concepts – *liberal and postmodernist*. By using both liberal and postmodernist feminist frameworks, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of gender inequality in Japan's politics.

Political theory of liberal feminism aims to achieve gender equality by addressing legal and political barriers that limit women's opportunities and rights. It seeks to reform existing institutions and systems to create a more equitable society. Political theory of liberal feminism is mostly evident in adopted policies aimed to increase the number of represented female members. Postmodernist feminism, on the other hand, questions the very foundations of traditional power structures, including gender norms and categories. It emphasizes the deconstruction of existing binary categories and challenges fixed identities. Theory of postmodernist feminism shows the importance of deeper changes, which address the cultural norms, instead of only legal and policy-initiated changes, which are more common for liberal feminism.

In terms of **methodology**, in this paper *content analysis* will be used. Regardless of the type of written material, content analysis can be applied to it, whether it is documents, interview transcripts, media products, or personal interviews. For this type of research, it is extremely significant to use related official documents. More precisely, I examine official documents such as: Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year (1975); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995); Basic Act

for Gender Equal Society (Act No. 78 of 1999); Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality; Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality; Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field (2018); Expansion of Women's Participation in Policy and Decision-making Processes in All Fields in Society; National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, Second Edition (2019-2022).

Secondly, I will also use a *historical comparative analysis* as one of the methods. This method provides a way to study relations in historical contexts using a comparative framework. It helps us understand how different factors interact and influence each other over time. Such method will be relevant to this analysis, as it will enable a comparison of different periods to identify changes that have occurred.

The **object** is the Parliament of Japan, while the **subject** is women representation at the Parliament of Japan.

This research is **relevant** because the importance of women in politics cannot be overstated. Women account for 51.3% of Japan's population and 51.7% of the eligible voters (Japanese Government Statistics, 2021). Participation of both women and men in the decision-making process leads to a sustainable society and a society comfortable for all people. (Government of Japan, The Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, 2021) The proportion of women among all (national) parliamentarians in a country is an important measure of the democratic extent of politics. The underrepresentation of women is often considered a “democratic deficit” by international supervisory agencies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women in the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Sawer, Tremblay, & Trimble, 2006, p. 1) A successful policy involves establishing gender equality as a value in society. This is primarily the prevention of gender discrimination, ensuring the equal participation of women and men in the adoption of important decisions.

For the **literature review**, I've analyzed works of different scholars, who have done research on gender inequality issue in Japan. I specifically focused on works of

Japanese scholars who wrote in English, providing information from Japanese sources and translating some statements and speeches. Works of Professor of Political Science at Hosei University Mikiko Eto were useful in gaining specific information about women in political sphere in Japan; she also provided translated statements from Japanese newspapers and articles. Namely, I focused on these works: “Women and Representation in Japan: The Causes of Political Inequality”, “‘Gender’ Problems in Japanese Politics: A Dispute over a Socio-Cultural Change towards Increasing Equality” and “Women and Political Inequality in Japan: Gender-Imbalanced Democracy”. Work of Professor Yoshie Kobayashi “A path toward gender equality: State feminism in Japan” was useful in better understating of political theories within politics in Japan. Professor of University of Wollongong, Emma Dalton, is a Japanese studies scholar with interdisciplinary research interests in sociology and political science. Her works were useful in general understanding of contemporary situation, regarding gender inequality issue in Japan. For theoretical analysis I used works of different feminist theoretics, such as Martha Nussbaum, Judith Butler, Judith Squires and Valerie Bryson.

*First chapter* is divided into two sections. In the first section, I introduce the topic of feminist political theory and explain its relevance to my research. Also, I provide examples of feminist political theorists and their contributions to the field. Moreover, I choose two feminist concepts – postmodernist and liberal – to view gender inequality in Japan through different outlooks. In the second section, I define the key terms that will be used throughout my research. By providing clear definitions of these terms, I ensure that all specific meaning won’t cause any confusion or misunderstandings.

*The second chapter* focuses on the international and domestic efforts to address the issue of gender inequality in Japan's politics. This chapter provides the various initiatives that have been implemented at the international and domestic levels. It includes an examination of international treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and how they have influenced Japanese policy on gender equality. Additionally, I analyze programs and initiatives that have been implemented to increase women's representation in politics, such as gender quotas.

*In the third section* I explore the issue of gender inequality in Japan's politics through the lens of liberal and postmodernist feminism. Furthermore, I apply these frameworks to my analysis of gender inequality. For instance, I examine how liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of individual rights and opportunities for women, and how this framework can inform policies such as affirmative action and gender quotas. Alternatively, I explore how postmodernist feminism critiques the idea of a fixed, universal concept of "woman" and instead emphasizes the importance of gender-free politics.

## CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *1.1 Feminist Political Theory: Liberal and Postmodernist Outlook*

Feminism has emerged as a vital subfield within the broader discipline of political science. At its core, feminist political science seeks to explore and understand the ways in which gender influences political processes and outcomes. The influence of feminist theorizing on both theoretical frameworks and practical applications can't be overstated. It has significantly altered and reshaped core inquiries within the realm of political philosophy, while also triggered changes in the real world at both national and international levels.

By examining the intersections of gender and power, feminist political scientists seek to shed light on how gender shapes the distribution of power and the formation of policies. In this chapter, I will explore the key concepts of feminist political science from liberal and postmodernist view, as well as the ways in which this theory fits my research.

To start with, feminism has made a significant contribution to political theory through its implementation of feminist political practices. It has been a consistent element in contemporary societies and has involved itself in traditional politics while also expanding the field of political activity in ways that are meaningful both practically and theoretically. As Professor Ericka Tucker (2014, p. 22) states, the boundaries between feminist political theory and feminist theory in general are not fixed and can be crossed for valid reasons. Feminist political theorists often extend traditional political theory and engage with feminist theorists who are addressing a broader range of issues.

The issue of political representation of women has been a significant topic in the study of gender and politics globally. Feminist scholars worldwide have made efforts to examine and clarify this matter. However, as Doctor of Philosophy in Hosei University Mikiko Eto states, it is noticeable that Japan is not actively participating in this international academic discourse. Among developed countries, Japan stands out in its lack of attempts to address the issue of women's representation and connect it to broader international discussions in feminist scholarship. (Eto, 2010, p. 179)

Political theory comes in two, analytically distinct but connected, forms. First there is prescriptive political theory of how governance ought to be done. This theory sets limits to governance, by analyzing relevant concepts such as equality, rights, freedom, obligation and justice ideals that should be realized, or at least must not be undermined, by government, if that government is to be legitimate. Second, descriptive political theory looks at how legitimate government can be done, by way of analysis of concepts and phenomena such as authority, power, law, decision-making, judgement. (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 51)

Moving to the concepts I have chosen – I will begin with liberal feminism. Liberal feminism is a political theory that emphasizes individualism and equal rights for all individuals, regardless of their gender. It seeks to achieve gender equality through legal and political reforms within existing societal structures.

The theory of liberal feminism posits that the key tenets of liberal philosophy, which include freedom, equity, human rights, and impartiality, are also the suitable objectives of feminist philosophy. Its primary aim is to achieve gender equality through political and legal reforms within the framework of a liberal democratic system. (Maynard, 1995) In this perspective, which commonly regards "feminism" as synonymous with "feminist theory," the primary focus of "liberal feminists" is to ensure that women receive complete access to political, economic, and social rights in society.

Martha Nussbaum's, Professor in Harvard University, outlines her version of liberal feminism in the book "Sex and Social Justice" (Nussbaum, 1999), she calls this theory the "capabilities approach." This approach focuses on the capabilities or freedoms that individuals need in order to participate in political life. Nussbaum also argues that a just society should provide equal opportunities for men and women to develop their capabilities, and that the state has a role in promoting gender equality through legislation and policies. Her work has been influential in shaping contemporary debates on feminist political theory and has contributed to the ongoing development of liberal feminist thought.

Secondly, I will systemize postmodernist approach in feminist theory. It is grounded in the broader postmodern movement, it is a critique of traditional feminist theory, which is seen as essentialist and reductionist in its approach to gender and identity. Postmodernist feminism challenges the idea that there is a single, fixed identity or experience of gender. Instead, it argues that gender and identity are constructed through social and cultural processes that are constantly changing and evolving.

In accordance with postmodern lines of thought, the American philosopher Judith Butler challenges the very binary categories that we use to think about both gender and sexual orientation. (Feminist and Gender Theories, p. 316)

Judith Butler's seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1999) helped to popularize postmodern feminism in the United States. Butler's objective is not just to demonstrate that social forms of power construct gender and sex but also that our bodies become gendered and by means of prescribed performances. She asserts that neither gender nor sex is an inherent characteristic, but rather a set of symbols that we display through costumes and performances. As a postmodernist, she criticizes other feminist theories for attempting to explain the universal methods of women's subjugation, which she claims is itself an exclusionary "hegemonic" practice that mirrors the very practices feminism aims to criticize. (Watson, 2013)

Some writers see postmodernism as a means of solving long-standing issues that have divided feminists. This movement challenges the binary thinking that has constrained feminist discourse by portraying "equality" and "difference" as mutually exclusive and hierarchical options. This has left feminists with no choice but to advocate either for women's inclusion in male-dominated political systems or for the recognition and appreciation of traditionally "feminine" attributes, perspectives, and roles. Valerie Bryson, citing Judith Squires, outlines that the postmodern strategy of 'displacement' goes beyond strategies based on 'inclusion' or 'reversal': "The strategy of inclusion seeks gender-neutrality; the strategy of reversal seeks recognition for a specifically female gendered identity; and the strategy of displacement seeks to deconstruct those discursive regimes that engender the subject." (Bryson, 2016, p. 236)

The aim of postmodern feminist politics is the end of gender and the creation of new human beings who are self-determining and fully participate in the development of their own constantly evolving subjectivity. (Bryson, 2016, p. 250)

Whereas feminists committed to modern ideas about gender ask the question, “And what about women?,” postmodern feminists such as Judith Butler ask, “And what do you mean by ‘women’?” Butler challenges the notion that "women" can be seen as a fixed and definable group, instead considering gender identity as a fluid and uncertain concept. She critiques contemporary feminists for adhering to traditional binary classifications that she believes inevitably contribute to the continuation of sexism. (Feminist and Gender Theories, p. 372)

To conclude, as Lori Watson, Professor of Philosophy in University of Illinois-Chicago, explains, the main objectives of feminism, in a broad sense, are twofold: firstly, to comprehend, assess, and examine the types and origins of gender inequality, and secondly, to highlight policies and strategies to get rid of gender inequality. (Watson, 2013) That is, basically, the explanation of relevance of this theory in my research. Following this paper, I will define the policies, that have been provided to lower the gap between men and women. Moreover, the results of this research will be divided in two frameworks – liberal and postmodern, giving broader approach to the issue of gender inequality at the parliament of Japan.

## *1.2 Research through terms: glass ceiling, gaiatsu, gendering of policy and other definitions*

This chapter will provide an overview of some of the key terms associated with feminism and the topic of the research. By exploring these terms, I aim to provide a deeper understanding of the feminist political theory and relevant situation in Japanese politics.

First term is *gender inequality*, which refers to the unequal treatment and opportunities between individuals of different genders. It is often characterized by the unequal distribution of power, resources, and social status based on gender. This inequality can manifest in many ways; in case of my research, I specifically refer to the gender inequality in politics. It is about the unequal representation and participation of men and women in political processes and structures. Despite progress in recent years, women are still underrepresented in political leadership roles around the world. This is often due to structural barriers and discriminatory practices that limit women's access to political power.

In such case, gender-equal society means: a society where women and men have equal opportunities to participate willingly in all areas as equal partners, and where they can equally enjoy political, economic, social, and cultural benefits, as well as share responsibilities. (Article 2 of the Basic Law for a Gender-equal Society, 1999, Japan)

Secondly, the term *glass ceiling* in politics refers to an invisible but persistent barrier that prevents women from advancing to higher levels of political power and leadership, even when they possess the necessary qualifications and experience. This barrier is often due to entrenched gender bias and discrimination, which can make it difficult for women to gain access to important networks and resources, receive equal pay and recognition, and break through stereotypes and gendered expectations.

However, in case of Japan, the glass ceiling is also considered as *steel ceiling*. This term was used by Koike Yuriko, Governor of Tokyo since 2016, during her unsuccessful bid for the presidency of the Liberal Democratic Party in 2008. Koike noted that Hillary

Clinton used the word “glass ceiling”... but in Japan, it isn’t glass, it’s an iron plate. (Sieg, 2008)

The next term, which will be used is – *gaiatsu*. *Gaiatsu* is a Japanese term that refers to external pressure or influence exerted on a country from outside its borders. This can include political, economic, or cultural pressure from foreign governments, international organizations, or multinational corporations.

In the context of Japanese politics and society, *gaiatsu* has been an important factor in shaping policy and social change. For example, pressure from international organizations and foreign governments played a key role in pushing for gender equality and women's rights in Japan, as well as in promoting environmental protections and labor rights.

However, *gaiatsu* can also be a contentious issue in Japanese politics, as some groups view it as a threat to national sovereignty or cultural identity. On the other hand, others argue that external pressure can be a catalyst for positive change and can help address domestic issues and challenges. As Professor Akitoshi Miyashita states in his work – ‘the story of Japan’s policy toward post-Tiananmen China tells us that *gaiatsu* played a significant role in shaping Japan’s behavior. In the absence of *gaiatsu*, Japan’s policy toward China certainly would have been different from what it actually was.’ (Miyashita, 1999) This term will be used in the analysis of international impact on the gender inequality issue in Japan. As it will be evident, *gaiatsu* actually shapes specific parts of Japan’s politics.

*Gendering of policy* as term means the process of integrating gender perspectives and considerations into the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies. In politics, the gendering of policy is important to promote greater gender equality and to address the historical and systemic barriers that have limited women's participation and representation in political decision-making. This can involve the development of policies and practices that promote women's leadership and political participation, such as quota systems and mentoring programs for women leaders.

The next term, that will be constantly used in my research, is *quota system*. A quota system for women in politics is a policy mechanism designed to increase the number of women in elected or appointed political positions. As Mikiko Eto (2010, p. 179) states, the quota is the most powerful potential measure in parties' positive actions for women.

It is typically used as a temporary measure to overcome barriers that have limited women's representation and participation in political decision-making. Quota systems can take different forms, but generally involve setting targets or specific numbers of women candidates to be included on electoral lists or appointed to political positions. For example, a quota system may require that a certain percentage of candidates on electoral lists be women, or that a certain number of women be appointed to cabinet positions or other key political roles.

Last but not least, I will explain the term *gender-free*, but from Japanese perspective. The specific part of this term is that, at first, it was interpreted in a wrong way. Professor Mikiko Eto, citing Mari Osawa, (2016, p. 370-71) explains this term as a way of liberating women and men from gender stereotypes. While some feminist scholars were hesitant to acknowledge it as feminist terminology due to its Japanese-style English, the phrase gained significant traction and became widely adopted within feminist circles. This immediate acceptance can be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, the phrase effectively conveys both gender-related issues and potential solutions in a straightforward manner. Additionally, it serves as a convenient means of communication among feminists working in diverse fields.

In conclusion, the use of terminology is a crucial aspect of discussing and understanding issues related to gender and politics. I have explored terms like: gender inequality and what gender-equal society means, the glass ceiling (or steel ceiling in Japan), *gaiatsu* (external pressure), the gendering of policy, quota systems, and the concept of 'gender-free' from a Japanese perspective.

## CHAPTER II. ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY: INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC INITIATIVES

### *2.1 International documents and their influence on women in Japanese politics*

Japan has been heavily influenced by international community in some of their decisions, including the issue of gender inequality in politics. Considering this fact, it is important to start with the international documents, which had an impact on the contemporary situation related to my research.

In previous chapter, I have given an explanation to Japanese term '*gaiatsu*', which means foreign pressure. This term is relevant, since in this chapter I will show how international organizations, specifically United Nations (UN), changed the gender inequality situation in Japanese politics. There has been a global focus on promoting women's participation in politics, which is commonly known as women's empowerment. The United Nations has played a key role in this effort by working to increase the number of women in politics.

The United Nations impact is significant, since the Japanese government places a high priority on the United Nations. In such case, it will be relevant to mention that the government of Japan adopted a foreign policy principle of "UN-centrism" or "UN-centered diplomacy" soon after Japan joined the UN on December 18, 1956. This principle reflects Japan's commitment to working closely with the UN and prioritizing the organization's objectives in its foreign policy decisions. The term "UN-centrism" was first employed by Foreign Minister Nobusuke Kishi. In the Upper House plenary on February 5, 1957, Kishi stated that his administration adhered to UN-centrism and that 'from now on, our country should as our basic diplomatic policy contribute to global peace and prosperity through the United Nations'. (Yasui, 2010, p. 15) According to Mikiko Eto's (2020) explanation, in Kishi's statement, UN-centered diplomacy meant that the country acted in accordance with the norms of the UN Charter and strived to contribute to the realization of international justice by having Japanese voices actively and constructively heard.

Moving to the events that influenced gender issue in Japan, Liu & Yamashita (2019, p. 79) describe that, in the first year of the UN decade for women, 1975, Japanese women participated in the Non-Governmental Organization forum held in Mexico. Later that same year, a group called *Kokusai Fujinnen Renrakukai* (The International Women's Year Liaison Group) was established. The group consisted of around 50 women's groups from across the country, including labor unions, and aimed to organize the Women's Conference in Japan for International Women's Year.

Before the UN year of women, a group of 25 established women's groups, led by prominent older women leaders such as Fusae Ichikawa, a pre-war suffragette and Congresswoman at the time, and Keiko Higuchi, a renowned social critic, came together to establish *Kokusai Fujin Nenwo Kikkakeni Kōdōsuru Onnatachi no Kai* (The Society of Women who Start Action for the UN Year of Women). The group advocated for the Japanese government to sign the UN Treaty for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women at the second Government Organization conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980. In 1985, during the third UN women's conference in Nairobi, Kenya, the Japanese Diet ratified the UN treaty that had been signed by the Government Organization representative. (Liu & Yamashita, 2019, p. 79)

Furthermore, initiative that played an important role in promoting women participation in politics in the world, as well as in Japan, was Beijing Platform for Action. According to UN Women official site: 'The Beijing Platform for Action is a global agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. It was adopted at the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995, and serves as a framework for governments to promote women's rights and gender equality.' The Beijing Platform for Action urged member countries to develop action plans to achieve their goals by the end of 1996. In response to this call for action, the Japanese government created its own plan to promote gender equality in decision-making, which was completed on December 13, 1996. The plan included a target of increasing the proportion of women on advisory councils to 20% by the end of 2000, in line with United Nations resolutions on gender equality. (Eto, 2020, p. 275)

In June of 2000, the United Nations held a special assembly in New York for the Women's Conference, which focused on the crucial role of women's participation in decision-making positions. At the conference, political parties were urged to take concrete steps towards achieving this goal, such as implementing quota systems, utilizing affirmative action or positive discrimination practices, and creating internship programs aimed to develop women as leaders. (LeBlanc, 2018, p. 168)

As part of its efforts to promote gender equality, the United Nations keeps track of the representation of women in politics around the world. If a member country has a low proportion of women politicians, the UN uses its influence to encourage the country to develop and implement strategies to increase women's representation. For such progress, the UN has proposed the introduction of gender quotas. On March 2, 2012, at a press conference in New York, Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) “encouraged countries to use quotas to expand women’s participation in parliament.” (UN official, 2012). As it will be explained in the next chapter, the quota system played the significant role in expanding women’s participation in political field in Japan.

Lastly, under pressure from the United Nations, the Japanese government tried to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions. The government set numerical targets for the proportion of women serving on advisory councils, with the final goal being 40%. However, no plans had been made regarding the proportion of women serving as legislators until the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality Society was created under the Democratic government on December 17, 2010. This plan aimed to increase the proportion of women in decision-making roles at all levels to 30% by 2020 and was the first plan to set a goal of having 30% women candidates in Lower and Upper House elections by 2020.

According to the text of the document, ‘the Third Basic Plan examines matters raised in the latest CEDAW concluding observations and strives for international harmonization, giving weight to international ideas and perspectives on gender through measures such as active observance and domestic implementation of international criteria

and standards.’ (Summary of Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, 2010) However, the plan did not impose any obligations on political parties nor did it restrict their autonomy in political activities. The parties were only requested to make an effort to increase the number of women serving in these roles.

As it is seen, Japan has faced criticism and pressure from international organizations and other countries regarding its gender inequality issues. Thus, *gaiatsu* has played a role in bringing attention to and pushing for reforms related to gender equality in Japan. Pressure from external sources has encouraged the Japanese government, organizations, and society as a whole to recognize and address gender disparities in various sectors, including the political sphere.

In conclusion, Japan made a noteworthy impact at global conferences centered around matters of gender inequality. This active involvement acted as a source of motivation for Japanese women and brought attention to the importance of progress in social and political spheres. Additionally, it provided opportunities for Japanese women to establish connections with likeminded activists from various countries. As it is evident from this chapter, gender inequality issue was strongly influenced by the international pressure on Japan, since they set the standards of women’s involvement in political sphere, which Japan adopted in their way. However, it is important to note that while *gaiatsu* can serve as a catalyst for change, sustainable progress in addressing gender inequality ultimately relies on domestic efforts and a commitment from within the country.

## *2.2 State-initiated legislation for women's representation*

In order to achieve diversity and enhance women's representation, the Japanese government has implemented several initiatives to increase the participation of women in the political field – specifically for this research, at the Parliament. Moreover, The Declaration (1975) also emphasized the role that governments must play to advance these changes. It continued: “Women and men of all countries should have equal rights and duties and that it is the task of all States to create the necessary conditions for the attainment and the exercise thereof”. (United Nations Digital Library, Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, 1975)

This has led to the progress in promoting gender equality in a society that has been traditionally male-dominated. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, the issue of the glass ceiling – which obstructs women from reaching high-level executive roles – remains a persistent challenge in Japan, as well as in other nations. Despite Japan's substantial economic progress and achievements in establishing democratic political structures, the traditional sociopolitical culture that encourages women to focus on domestic responsibilities rather than political engagement persists in numerous regions of the country.

Since in this chapter I examine state-initiated changes, it will be relevant to add the statistical data on Japan's place among other countries in gender inequality field. For analysis I use GII (Gender Inequality Index). It is a tool developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to measure gender equality and women's empowerment. It consists of various indicators, including those related to political empowerment. According to the 2021 GII report, Japan ranks 121st out of 162 countries in terms of political empowerment of women, with a score of 0.103 out of 1.00. This score indicates a relatively low level of political participation and representation of women in Japan. In terms of specific indicators related to political empowerment, the report shows that women in Japan hold 14.2% of parliamentary seats, which is slightly higher than the global average, but still relatively low compared to other high-income

countries. As it is shown in GII scheme, the gender gap between men and women in parliament is equal to -71.5% (Data Center of UNDP).

After highlighting the report, regarded to the Japan's place among other states, I will move to the legislations of Japanese government. Mainly, these initiatives can be considered as the answer to the international influence. Thus, the already mentioned term *gaiatsu* will be relevant here too. Chronological borders of my research are 1990 to 2022, in such matter I will start with the initiatives from 90s.

To start with, The Basic Act for Gender Equal Society, also known as "the basic act for cooperative decision making in society between the sexes", was established in June 1999 as a response to the Beijing platform. According to the text of Act, the aim of this initiative was to clarify basic concepts pertaining to formation of a gender-equal society and indicate the direction these should take, and to comprehensively and systematically promote the State's, local governments' and citizens' measures pertaining to formation of a gender-equal society. Article Eight of this act mandates that the government implement measures, such as positive plans, to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies at all levels. (Basic Act for Gender Equal Society (Act No. 78 of 1999)) Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office on their official site adds that, since the Basic Plan for Gender Equality was formulated on December 12, 2000, the plan was revised in 2005 and 2010. In such case, I will outline the changes during this period of time.

The Diet is a bicameral legislature, composed of two houses, the Lower House or the House of Representatives and the Upper House or the House of Councilors. The Lower House is more powerful than the Upper House; votes by the Lower House precede those by the Upper House and only the Lower House can pass a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet. Thus, I divide the data into two figures: the Upper House (Figure 1) and the Lower House (Figure 2).

As it is evident from Figure 1 and 2, the percentage of women's representation has changed. It is less noticeable in the Upper House, where the changes are uneven, going

up and down during ten years, but there is still a rise in the 2010. On the other hand, the uplift in the Lower House is more visible. As the Figure 2 shows, there are ten more female candidates every few years during period from establishing the Act to 2010.

As Emma Dalton explains such changes, the sharp rises in 2005 and 2009 were the result of measures taken by then Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader and Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro (2005) and then opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leader Ozawa Ichiro (2009). (Dalton, 2020, p. 201)

Following the research of state-initiated policies, the next ten years also had their own outcomes. I have specifically focused on this timeframe due to the observable results that emerged after Shinzo Abe became the prime minister in 2012 and held the position for nearly nine years. Furthermore, during this period, attention was given to the implementation of a quota system aimed at increasing the representation of women at the Parliament.

At that time, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his cabinet actively advocated for policies aimed at advancing women. Since 2013, they have been focused on promoting initiatives to empower women in various areas. Following the issue of gender inequality, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe clearly stated in his address at the Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations Open a New Window on 26 September, 2013, – “the Government of Japan will cultivate the power of women as the greatest potential for the growth of the Japanese economy, and further strengthen cooperation with the international community as well as assistance to developing countries with the belief that creating "a society in which women shine" will bring vigor to the world. At the United Nation’s General Assembly, Prime Minister Abe emphasized Japan’s intention to enhance cooperation with the international community and its assistance to developing countries for women’s empowerment and gender-equality.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023)

However, the primary aim of Abe was the recovery of Japan’s economy and to maintain the support of voters. Which is obvious, since one of his first initiatives was

called “*Womenomics*”, a set of policies designed to mobilize Japanese women’s labor as the “third arrow” of his “*Abenomics*” economic revitalization plan. (Pavloska, 2019, p. 159) At that point, Shinzo Abe recognized that addressing women's advancement would help with achieving these tasks. As Professor of Tokai University, Yuki Tsuji (2019, p. 148) explains, women’s advancement policies were a useful tool for former prime minister. For Abe, the focus was more on increasing women’s labor force participation than on actually realizing gender equality. Tsuji (2019) also adds that, although it is not widely recognized, Abe and his advisors were not the originators of the policy change within the LDP regarding women’s issues. Instead, it was Koike Yuriko, a female Member of Parliament (MP), who took the initiative to assess the party's approach to women's policies. Following the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) loss to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in 2009, Koike and like-minded colleagues formed a committee within the LDP that focused on deliberating policies related to women.

Although there are valid reasons to maintain a positive outlook regarding women's advancement after Shinzo Abe’s statements, achieving progress at the Parliament of Japan appears to be more challenging. As an example, from 2012 to 2016 there were no significant changes in the number of female parliamentarians. On both Figure 1 and Figure 2 we can see that there is even a lower number of women than in previous years, which does not add up to the highlighted initiatives.

This fact was reaffirmed by the Lower House elections held in October 2017, where the representation of female members in the Diet remained at an extremely low level. (Emmott, 2020, p. 118) Major Japanese parties have sometimes unexpectedly nominated women candidates; however, this was not because the parties were keen to increase the number of female legislators, but because male party leaders merely utilized women candidates as campaign strategies. Political parties in Japan have not shown any interest in electoral gender quotas, and the subsequent absence of such quotas has severely limited progress in the representation of women in Japan. (Eto, 2010, p. 196).

In an attempt to address this issue, the Diet passed a law in May 2018 (Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field) urging political parties to “equalize

as much as possible” and strive for a more balanced representation of female and male candidates in national and local elections. Nevertheless, The Act establishes the fundamental principles for advancing gender equality in politics, but it does not impose any legal requirements on political parties or other organizations to increase the representation of women members or candidates in public office. According to Article 4, political parties and organizations are solely encouraged to take voluntary initiatives in addressing the issue of promoting gender equality in politics. (Kotake, 2019)

In 2019 as the response to the Security Council’s requests provided in Security Council Resolution 1325 and other relevant resolutions, the National Action Plan aims to review, from a gender perspective, the Japanese government’s policies, and assistance in conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities, including participating in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKOs), humanitarian relief, recovery and reconstruction assistance and to promote women’s empowerment. By doing so it would enable to clarify measures to be taken in the future, which strengthen the existing policies and initiatives. Goal 4 of this initiative introduce the gender equality perspective in decision making concerning national policies to implement security, defense, and diplomatic policies, and increase women’s participation in these field including in decision making. (National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security: Second Edition, 2019)

Additionally, the Government of Japan have implemented measures to increase women's participation at the Parliament – they established quota system for female candidates. In the Chapter 1.2 I mentioned the term quota system, which refers to the policy mechanism used to increase the representation of minority groups. The importance of a quota system at the Parliament of Japan lies in its potential to address gender inequality and promote women's representation in politics. In the Fifth Basic Plan government requires that the proportion of women in the Diet should be 35% by 2025 in both Upper and Lower House. To compare, as for the 2019 the percent of women in the House of Councilors was 17.8% and in the House of Representatives was 28.1%. (Government of Japan, The Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, 2021). Even though, as

it was mentioned earlier, according to the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality Society, the representation of women had to achieve 30% by 2020.

As of January 2022, the Japanese House of Councilors consisted of 242 members with 56 female parliamentarians. On the other hand, as of December 2021, the Japanese House of Representatives comprised 465 members, 45 of them are women. However, it is still too soon to highlight the changes after adoption of The Fifth Basic Plan, since members of The House of Representatives are elected anew in general elections every four years, unless the cabinet dissolves the house earlier. In case of The House of Councilors, members serve six-year terms once elected. Regular elections are held every three years, resulting in the replacement of half of the house members. In such case, there is a possibility that the percentage of female parliamentarians may increase in future elections, with a focus on the policy of obligating the Parliament of Japan to reach 35% of represented women.

In conclusion, the representation of women at the Parliament in contemporary Japan remains relatively low, despite efforts to increase their participation; women make up only a small percentage of elected officials in the country. It is evident that international influence played a significant role in pursuing the gender equality idea in Japan, the government answered with related policies. In spite of the establishment of the committee dedicated to discussing policies concerning women, as mentioned earlier, the impact of these efforts on gender equality within the Parliament itself is quite limited. Finally, the situation can change in future elections to the Diet due to the established 35% quota.

## CHAPTER III. A COMPARISON OF LIBERAL AND POSTMODERN FEMINIST VIEWS

### *3.1 Liberal feminism: Quotas on women in politics and whether they change anything*

Liberal feminist political theory contend that the fundamental objectives of liberal ideology are: liberty, equality, human rights, and justice. Before defining gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan through lens of liberal feminism framework, it is important to provide an overview of it and extend the information from Chapter 1.

Liberal feminists use figures and concepts from the liberal tradition to develop feminist institutions and political analyses. They propose that achieving women's liberation requires treating and acknowledging them as equals. (Tucker, 2014, p. 16) Modern liberal feminists aim to bring about changes in the legal and political systems, enabling women to access opportunities and achieve equality with men. Liberal feminist theory has been employed in research to develop strategies for legal reforms that foster women's active participation in politics. (Sindhuja & Murugan, 2021)

Yoshie Kobayashi (2004, p. 17) explains, that this theory is evidently rooted in liberalism, as it posits that by evaluating women's abilities equally with men, their participation in traditionally male-dominated public spheres can be achieved. Consequently, attaining legal equality, equal opportunities, and increasing women's involvement in politics could effectively eradicate gender-based inequalities. The principal strategy of liberal feminism, therefore, revolves around advocating for the eradication of gender inequality through legal and legislative measures.

Furthermore, liberal feminism places emphasis on the importance of descriptive representation, a concept introduced by Hanna F. Pitkin (1967). This aspect prompts researchers to examine whether an increase in the presence of women in politics results in the development of policies that benefit women's interests. This concept centers on the idea of a "politics of presence", which investigates the actual participation of women in

political processes. It also involves considering and implementing public policies that might be called the “gendering of policy”.

Now that key principles of liberal feminist framework are determined, I can move on to viewing gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan through it. To serve the aim of this chapter, I will compare gained information from previous chapters with main concepts and ideas of liberal feminist political theory.

To begin with, international policies aimed at gender inequality are crucial for the political theory of liberal feminism. They provide a global perspective, set norms and initiate states to answer their standards. Policies like Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) enable liberal feminists to address gender inequality on a global scale. Thus, international policies match with the concept of liberal feminism, since they provide legal framework to address the issue of low representation of women.

The key idea of liberal feminist political theory, as it was mentioned, is that the state plays a significant role in promoting the representation of women by gendering official policies aimed at addressing the issue of gender inequality. In the context of my research, I specifically focused on examining how these legislative efforts have influenced the situation in the Diet and whether any noticeable changes have occurred.

For example, The Basic Act for Gender Equal Society (1999) was an important step in this direction, as it aimed to clarify the basic concepts of a gender-equal society and comprehensively promote measures to achieve equality. By mandating the implementation of measures, such as positive plans to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies, the Act sought to address the underrepresentation of women in politics. In my view, considering the perspective of political theory of liberal feminism, these changes were positive, since they answered the main paradigm that government ensure equality at the Parliament.

From an outlook of liberal feminist political theory, I can argue that Abe's approach primarily emphasized utilizing women's labor to drive economic growth rather than

placing gender equality as a fundamental principle. Liberal feminism focuses on equal rights and opportunities for women within established systems and institutions, with the goal of challenging discrimination based on gender. Although Abe's government recognized the significance of women's progress (Prime Minister's Office of Japan, Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at The Sixty-Eighth Session of The General Assembly of The United Nations, 2013), the lack of significant advancements in increasing female representation in Parliament raises doubts about the extent of their dedication to achieving gender equality.

Professor Mikiko Eto (2021, p. 140) explains that, within the realm of political culture, the Shinzo Abe's "all-women-shining" policy had a distinct impact. It resulted in the silencing of traditional politicians and their supporters. Prime Minister Abe, who was previously known for opposing the concept of "gender" and feminist movements, unexpectedly became a supporter for women's progress. However, there are doubts about whether he truly grasped the importance of gender issues.

Since the legislative measures are important for liberal feminism, the introduction of a quota system for female candidates at the Parliament represents a significant development. This measure aligns with the liberal feminist belief that deliberate interventions, such as quotas, can help overcome structural barriers and accelerate progress towards gender equality. The establishment of a target of 35% representation of women in both Lower and Upper House by 2025 in The Fifth Basic Plan demonstrates a commitment to addressing the underrepresentation of women at the Parliament of Japan. Referring to the concept of "politics of presence", I assume that the quota system and established target of 35% aligns with the framework of liberal feminist theory. Moreover, this target is officially set by the government which enhances the chances of the more noticeable female presence at the Parliament of Japan. However, it is important to note, that from standpoint of theory, government did not meet expectations in previous years, even though they already had a target of 30 %.

In examining the impact of these legislations on the Diet from perspective of liberal feminist political theory, it becomes apparent that progress has been somewhat mixed.

While there have been notable increases in the number of women in the Lower House during certain periods, the representation of women in the Upper House has been more inconsistent. This suggests that while some advances have been made, further efforts are needed to achieve a more balanced and equitable gender representation at the Parliament.

This lack of representation limits women's ability to shape policies that affect their lives and contributes to an imbalance of power. The Diet is controlled by conventions and customs established by men, which means that all aspects of parliamentary activities are influenced by male culture. Therefore, political theory of liberal feminism highlights the need to address discriminatory practices that humble women's political advancement.

To summarize, this chapter has delved into the subject of gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan through the lens of liberal feminist political theory. Liberal feminism, rooted in the principles of liberalism, emphasizes the importance of treating women as equals and advocates for legal and legislative measures to achieve gender equality. It places significance on descriptive representation and the "politics of presence", aiming to increase women's participation in politics and develop policies that address their interests. At the Parliament of Japan, it is evident that legislative efforts have been made to promote gender equality. From perspective of liberal feminism, Japanese government was more successful, since they aimed at the number of female members and provided related policies and initiatives. However, further efforts are required to achieve a more balanced gender representation at the Parliament of Japan.

### 3.2 Postmodern feminism and a gender-free view on the underrepresentation of women

Postmodern feminism aims to deconstruct the binary and hierarchical theories that were posited by earlier feminist perspectives. Postmodern feminists engage with the idea of deconstruction, particularly concerning the dominant discourse and established categories. (Migita, 2009, p. 23)

Feminist poststructuralists were critical of notions of agency, freedom, consciousness, and unity that form the basis of most feminist projects. Poststructuralist, or postmodern feminists, rejected the dualisms of the previous 20 years of feminist theory: man/woman, reason/emotion, difference/equality. They challenged the very notion of stable categories. (Tucker, 2014, p. 18)

In Chapter 1, I introduced and provided an explanation of the concept known as "*gender free*". However, in this chapter, I will elaborate further into its application and specifically address how this term is utilized in the context of gender inequality within the Parliament. From my perspective, the usage of this definition is closely intertwined with the political framework of postmodernist feminism.

Mikiko Eto (2016) in her work explains that, in fact, word "gender" was not widely used in Japan for quite a long time. The Japanese government was itself confused about the treatment of "gender". At the Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi on 15 to 26 July 1985, gender appeared as a key concept to improving the status of women, but was not used by government of Japan. Instead, they used term "co-participation". In May 1993, the term "co-participation" went through transformation and was replaced with "cooperative decision-making" to highlight the notion that women were not just passive participants, but active contributors engaged in decision-making processes. Since then, the government has expressed its commitment to gender equality through the phrase "*cooperative decision-making between the sexes.*" (Eto, 2016, p. 369).

During a meeting conducted by the Education and Science Committee in the Lower House on February 26, 2003, Keiko Yamauchi, a member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), posed a query regarding the interpretation of the term "gender-free" and proposed

that it should be defined as "the liberation from the consciousness of gender roles defined by stereotypes." (Eto, 2016, p. 379) To elaborate more on both "*Womenomics*" and the gender-free concept, Eto (2016, p. 382) adds that the Japanese public is more acquainted with the LDP's use of the term '*cooperative decision-making between the sexes*' rather than '*gender equality*'. The idea encapsulated by the LDP's phrase has been embraced by *Womenomics*, which emphasizes parity between women and men in the realm of public affairs.

In such case, I assume that "gender free" concept aligns with the perspective of postmodernist feminism. Specifically, this term explains how the political theory of postmodernist feminism can be viewed in case of political sphere in Japan. Both the Japanese idea and postmodernist feminism challenge the binary and fixed understanding of gender.

Analyzing gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan through the lens of postmodernist feminist political theory offers a different perspective that emphasizes the social construction of gender. Postmodernist feminist theory challenges traditional concepts of gender and seeks to deconstruct the existing power structures that perpetuate inequality.

This theoretical framework challenges traditional notions of power, gender, and politics, emphasizing the ways in which social constructs and discourses shape our understanding of gender and influence political processes. In examining the situation in the Japanese Diet, a postmodernist feminist analysis would focus on the complexities and contradictions inherent in the pursuit of gender equality within a patriarchal system.

From a postmodernist feminist perspective, all the mentioned inventions and official documents reflect the state's attempt to address gender inequality through legislative means. However, using the gained information about this framework, I presume that postmodernist feminists would critically question the effectiveness of such approaches in solving the issue of gender inequality and deconstructing it. In fact, they argue that the focus on "formal" equality, such as increasing the number of women in

decision-making bodies, may not necessarily lead to substantive changes or challenge the deeper systemic issues. As it is evident from my research, that was the main aim of the Japanese government. They mostly focused on how to enhance the *number* of women at the Parliament (even though, the success is still questionable), instead of challenging the “roots” of the issue, which lies in the cultural norms of Japanese society.

As for the data I have examined, the fluctuations in the percentage of women's representation in the Upper and Lower Houses of the Diet during different periods highlight the complexities of gender politics. The political theory of postmodernist feminism argue that statistics and numbers only do not emphasize the issue fully, since the representation of women is influenced by various factors such as political strategies, party dynamics, and societal expectations. To put it simply, for postmodernist feminism, the growth in the percentage of female members at the Parliament of Japan is not valid indicator for changes; policies aimed only at the number can be viewed as just “*for the record*”.

The introduction of a quota system for female candidates at the Parliament, as well as the establishment of targets for female representation, would be viewed with ambivalence by postmodernist feminists. While quotas can be seen as means to address underrepresentation, which is common idea of liberal feminists, postmodernist feminists would interrogate the underlying assumptions and potential consequences of such measures. It is important to note that while the quota system is seen as a practical strategy within postmodernist feminism, it is not the sole solution to gender inequality.

Considering the efforts of Japanese government, I assume that from the perspective of postmodernist feminism, gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan remains a serious issue and there are only small changes. As evident from the analysis above, the initiatives and policies implemented by the government struggle to effectively address the issue of women's underrepresentation at the Parliament of Japan. Instead of creating the comfort field for all parts of society, government aims to ‘fill’ the gap between male and female members.

Postmodernist feminists argue that there is nothing positive in increasing women's presence through setting minimum targets. From their point of view the gender inequality issue can be solved only when there won't be any binary separation. And, in case of quota system, it mainly looks like the temporary solution, since the actual root of the problem lies in the prejudice and cultural background of Japanese society. In fact, government paid attention to this concern: 'the entrenched and widely accepted stereotypes surrounding gender roles that have persisted in the minds of Japanese individuals for an extended period have posed a significant barrier to the realization of a genuinely gender-equal society' (Steps towards Gender Equality in Japan, Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2006). However, they failed to take that aspect into account when formulating and implementing the following legislations and policies.

Citing Professor Emma Dalton (2015, p. 101), advocating for increased female representation in politics by highlighting the differences between female and male politicians requires a careful approach. On one hand, it aims to emphasize the importance of representing women's interests, but on the other hand, it runs the risk of perpetuating gender stereotypes that associate women primarily with nurturing roles. Moreover, it is important to note that having more women in politics does not automatically ensure that politics will improve in any specific manner.

In conclusion, political theory of postmodernist feminism offers a perspective that aims to deconstruct binary sets, which are more common to other feminist frameworks. The concept of "gender free" in the context of Japanese politics aligns with the principles of postmodernist feminism, as both challenge necessary separation of male and female. However, postmodernist feminists would question the effectiveness of legislative approaches focused only on formal equality, such as increasing the number of women at the Parliament, as they argue for deeper systemic changes.

## CONCLUSION

Japan consistently ranks among the lowest in the world when it comes to female participation in political landscape, since its business and bureaucratic elites are extremely male-dominated. Nevertheless, in this research I showed how this issue is addressed within the Parliament of Japan through international and domestic legislations.

According to the tasks of my work, the following results were gained throughout research:

1. *Define feminist political theory and its main principles through liberal and postmodernist point of view for the research of gender inequality*

Feminist political theory is a framework that seeks to analyze and address discrimination based on gender. From a liberal viewpoint, feminist political theory emphasizes equal rights and opportunities for women within the existing political systems. It focuses on legal reforms, equal representation, and the removal of barriers to women's political participation. For political theory of liberal feminism it is very important to provide state-initiated legislations and spread the “politics of presence”.

On the other hand, from a postmodernist perspective, feminist political theory challenges binary assumptions. Key principles include deconstruction of gender norms, recognition of diverse experiences without putting specific spotlight on any part of society. Postmodernist feminists state that gender equality cannot be achieved through filling the gaps between men and women by simply increasing the number of female members. For postmodernist framework, it is significant to challenge the roots of the underrepresentation, which mainly lies in the cultural norms and prejudice.

2. *Explain the terminology related to the research of gender inequality*

Throughout the research, various terminologies related to the study of gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan have been explored. I have delved into concepts such as gender inequality and the definition of a gender-equal society, as well as examining topics like the glass ceiling (also referred to as the steel ceiling in Japan),

external pressure (known as *gaiatsu*), the influence of gendering policy, quota systems, and the notion of 'gender-free' from a Japanese standpoint.

3. *Summarize international and domestic initiatives to increase women's political representation in Japan*

The Japanese government has implemented various initiatives to enhance women's representation and promote diversity in the political field, particularly within the Parliament. Namely, Basic Act for Gender Equal Society; Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality; Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality; Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field; Expansion of Women's Participation in Policy and Decision-making Processes in All Fields in Society; National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, Second Edition. These efforts have been greatly influenced by international pressure, as demonstrated by the United Nations' emphasis on equal rights and the role of governments in advancing gender equality.

Using the data of number of women in the House of Councilors and House of Representatives, I highlighted these changes after adoption of policies. According to gained information, it has been determined that, while progress has been made in addressing gender inequality in a traditionally male-dominated society, the persistence of the glass ceiling remains a significant challenge at the Parliament of Japan.

4. *Examine gender inequality issue at the Parliament through prism of liberal and postmodernist frameworks*

The issue of gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan has been examined through the lenses of both liberal and postmodernist frameworks. The importance of different theories in the same question lies in their ability to offer multiple perspectives and explanations for a given issue. By considering multiple perspectives, I have got more comprehensive results of the issue of gender inequality at the Parliament of Japan.

In liberal feminism, the importance lies in the equal treatment and legal measures to achieve gender equality. From their perspective, legislations and official initiatives played a significant role in improving the number of women at the Parliament. The

Japanese government has made legislative efforts to promote gender equality, particularly in terms of increasing the number of female members through quotas and implementing related policies. However, further efforts are necessary to achieve a more equitable gender representation at the Parliament of Japan.

Postmodernist feminism in political theory challenges gender separation and seeks to deconstruct binary categories, which are prevalent in other feminist frameworks. The notion of "gender free" within Japanese politics aligns with the principles of postmodernist feminism, as both challenge the inherent division between male and female. However, postmodernist feminists critique the effectiveness of solely pursuing "formal" equality, which lies in numbers and percentage of women; they advocate for broader systemic changes, which address to another issue in political field of Japan. For postmodernist feminist framework it is also important to deconstruct social and cultural norms.

## List of used sources and literature:

Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field - English - Japanese Law Translation. (n.d.). <https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en/laws/view/3294/en> (Accessed 21.05.2023)

Basic Act for Gender Equal Society (Act No. 78 of 1999) [https://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/about\\_danjo/lbp/laws/pdf/laws\\_01.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/lbp/laws/pdf/laws_01.pdf) (Accessed 10.04.2023)

Bryson, V. (2016). *Feminist political theory*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Christensen, R. (2000). 2 The Impact of Electoral Rules in Japan. In R. Lee & C. Clark (Ed.), *Democracy and the Status of Women in East Asia* (pp. 25-46). Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781626373273-004>

Coates, J., Fraser, L., & Pendleton, M. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture*. Routledge.

Dalton, E. (2015). *Women and politics in contemporary Japan*. Routledge.

Dalton, E., (2022, October 7). Was Abe Shinzo's Womenomics policy good for women or the economy? Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/was-abe-shinzos-womenomics-policy-good-for-women-or-the-economy/>

Diet passes nonbinding legislation aimed at increasing women in politics <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/16/national/politics-diplomacy/diet-passes-nonbinding-legislation-aimed-increasing-women-politics/#.XhtPVS2ca9Q> (Accessed 28.04.2023)

Eto, M. (2010). Women and representation in Japan: The causes of political inequality. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12(2), 177-201.

Eto, M. (2020). *Women and Political Inequality in Japan: Gender Imbalanced Democracy*. Routledge.

Eto, M. (2023). Substantive Representation of Women in Japan: Pursuing Gender Equality in a Gender-Insensitive Parliament. In *Substantive Representation of Women in Asian Parliaments* (pp. 27-49). Routledge.

Eto, M. (2016). 'Gender' problems in Japanese politics: A dispute over a socio-cultural change towards increasing equality. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 17(3), 365-385.

Expansion of Women's Participation in Policy and Decision-making Processes in All Fields in Society | 内閣府男女共同参画局. (n.d.). (C) Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office. [https://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/mge/process/index.html](https://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/mge/process/index.html) (Accessed 21.05.2023)

Feminist and Gender Theories SAGE Publications  
[https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/38628\\_7.pdf](https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/38628_7.pdf)

Government of Japan, The Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality (Overview), March, 2021  
[https://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/about\\_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/5th\\_bpg.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/5th_bpg.pdf)  
(Accessed 21.05.2023)

Ismail, M., Mohd Rasdi, R., & Nadirah Abd. Jamal, A. (2011). Gender empowerment measure in political achievement in selected developed and developing countries. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 26(5), 380-392.

Jackson, S. & Jones, J. (1998). *Contemporary Feminist Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474469500>

Kobayashi, Y. (2004). *A path toward gender equality: State feminism in Japan*. Routledge.

LeBlanc, R. (2018). Gender and Japanese politics: Transformation by women. In *Japanese Contemporary Politics* (pp. 156-175). Routledge.

Liu, J., & Yamashita, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Gender Studies*. Routledge.

- Maynard, M. (1995). Beyond the 'big three': the development of feminist theory into the 1990s. *Women's History Review*, 4(3), 259-281.
- Migita, M. (2009). Gender-free education in Japan: Postmodern feminist approaches to knowledge construction in classrooms (Doctoral dissertation).
- Miyashita, A. (1999). Gaiatsu and Japan's Foreign Aid: Rethinking the Reactive-Proactive Debate. *International Studies Quarterly*, 43(4), 695–731. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3014027>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1999). *Sex and social justice*. Oxford University Press.
- Pitkin, H. (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley, California: University of California.
- Provisional Translation (September, 2019), National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Second Edition (2019-2022) <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000521395.pdf>
- Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 19 June-2 July 1975. (1976). United Nations Digital Library System. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/586225> (Accessed 10.04.2023)
- Sawer, M., Tremblay, M., & Trimble, L. (Eds.). (2006). *Representing women in parliament: a comparative study* (Vol. 14). Routledge.
- Sieg, L. 2008. "Japan PM Contender Sees 'Iron' Barrier for Women." <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-politics-women-idUSL769448120080907> (Accessed 28.04.2023)
- Sindhuja, P., & Murugan, K. R. *Strengthening Women's Participation in Local Governance—A Feminist Perspective*.
- Steel, G. (2019). *Beyond the Gender Gap in Japan* (Vol. 85). University of Michigan Press.
- Summary of Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality (Approved by the Cabinet in December 2010)

[https://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/about\\_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/3rd\\_bpg.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/3rd_bpg.pdf)

(Accessed 20.05.2023)

Summary of Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality (Approved by the Cabinet in December 2010)

[https://www.gender.go.jp/english\\_contents/about\\_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/3rd\\_bpg.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/english_contents/about_danjo/whitepaper/pdf/3rd_bpg.pdf)

(Accessed 30.04.2023)

The Beijing Platform for Action: inspiration then and now

<https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about> (Accessed 13.05.2023)

Tucker, E. (2014). Feminist political theory.

W. (2019, January 24). Recent Legislation in Japan No.2018-1 “Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field ” (Satoshi KOTAKE, Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Waseda University / Professor, Takushoku University). Institute of Comparative Law, Waseda University. <https://www.waseda.jp/foLaw/icl/news-en/2019/01/24/6503>

Watson, L. (2013). Feminist political theory. International Encyclopedia of ethics.

Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality. (n.d.). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page23e\\_000181.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pc/page23e_000181.html) (Accessed 27.04.2023)

Women’s political participation must be accelerated through quotas – UN official <https://news.un.org/en/story/2012/03/405382> (Accessed 13.05.2023)

Yasui, H. (2010). Understanding the background of the political and social movements supporting the United Nations (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

# Addition

Source: Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office

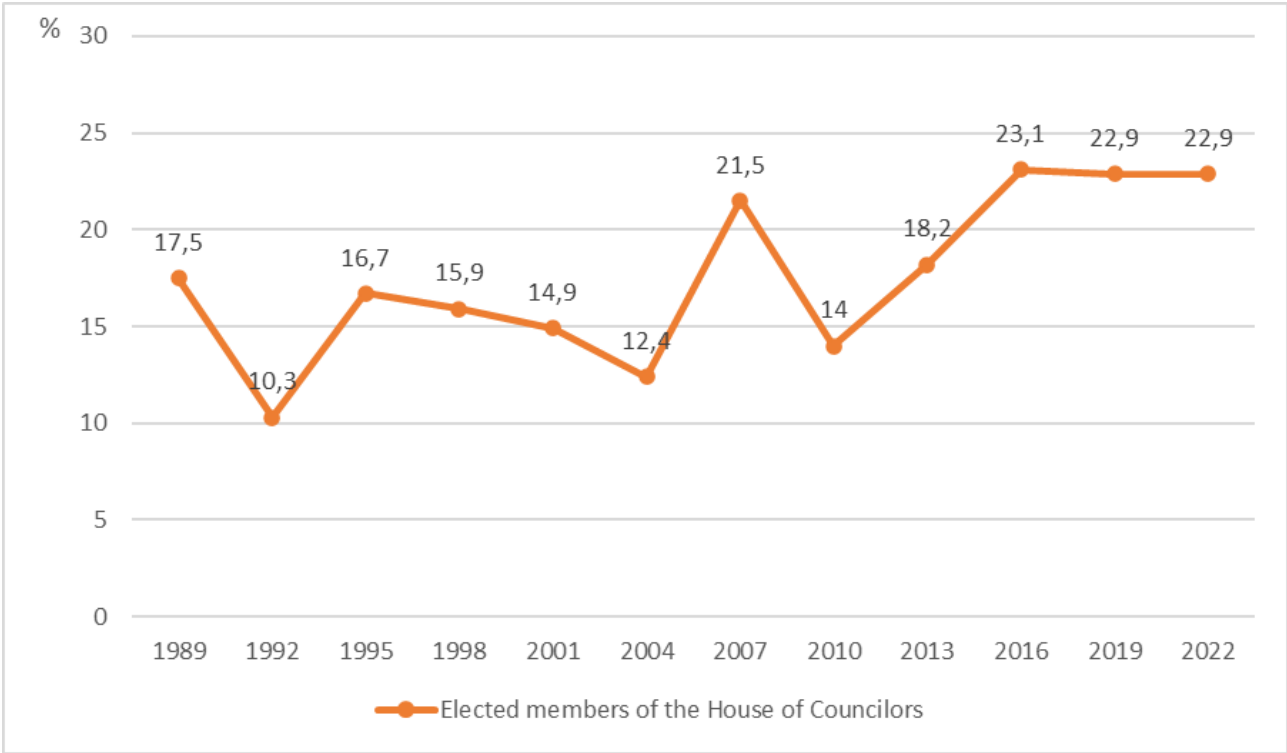


Figure 1. Number of female members in the House of Councilors in Japan from 1989 to 2022

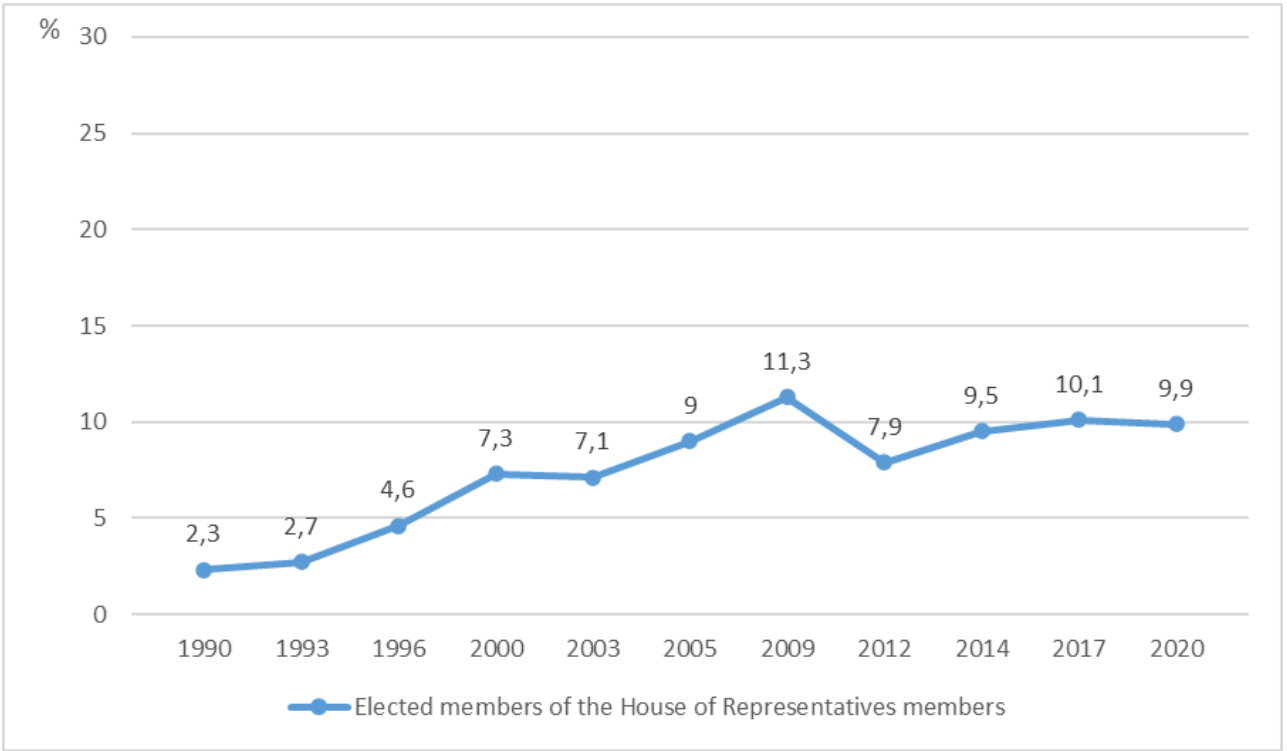


Figure 2. Number of female members in the House of Representatives in Japan from 1990 to 2021

## ABSTRACT

of the thesis

Topic: Women Representation at The Parliament of Japan: Changes Through the Lens of Liberal and Postmodern Feminism

Student: Kolida Kateryna, fourth year of study, Faculty of Social Sciences and Social Technologies

Supervisor: PhD (Waseda University), Candidate of Historical Sciences, senior lecturer Olena Mykal

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Short summary:

The paper examined the issue of low representation of women at the Parliament of Japan, using two frameworks of feminist political theory – liberal and postmodernist. The paper explored how this issue is addressed within the Parliament of Japan through international and domestic legislations. This research applied historical comparative analysis with chronological borders from 1990 to 2022 and content analysis of official documents and statements. By analyzing data on the number of women in the House of Councilors and House of Representatives, the research indicates that changes have been made in addressing gender inequality issue. Liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of equal treatment and legal measures. According to their viewpoint, Japanese government has made notable progress in solving the issue of gender inequality within the Parliament. On the other hand, postmodernist feminism critiques the effectiveness of solely pursuing numerical representation. Instead, it calls for more comprehensive systemic changes.

### Короткий зміст роботи:

У роботі розглядалося питання низького представництва жінок у парламенті Японії з використанням двох течій феміністичної політичної теорії – ліберальної та постмодерністської. У роботі досліджено, як це питання вирішується в парламенті Японії через міжнародне та національне законодавство. У цьому дослідженні застосовано історичний порівняльний аналіз з хронологічними межами з 1990 по 2022 роки та контент-аналіз офіційних документів і заяв. Аналізуючи дані про кількість жінок у Палаті Радників і Палаті Представників, дослідження вказує на зміни у вирішенні проблеми гендерної нерівності. Ліберальний фемінізм наголошує на важливості рівного ставлення та правових заходів. На їхню думку, уряд Японії досяг значного прогресу у вирішенні проблеми гендерної нерівності в парламенті. З іншого боку, постмодерністський фемінізм критикує ефективність лише числового представлення. Натомість він вимагає більш комплексних системних змін.