

# Preface

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We present a collection of essays on global women leaders in business, nonprofit organizations and government. They have risen to positions that many young women today aspire to achieve. While there is literature lauding American women leaders, there is less emphasis on non-North American women who hold leadership positions. Yet today, as young women are accepting positions in global organizations, they need to be aware of these fascinating women who can serve as role models for those joining local and global enterprises.

A recent study of North American women business leaders found that the women shared some common characteristics. They were, not surprisingly, smart, self-confident and determined to succeed. They dismissed or ignored what might seem to be discriminatory challenges because of their gender. Most of the women were situational leaders, adapting and readapting themselves to new situations and challenging circumstances. The women had a less hierarchical style than often evidenced in corporate leadership. They were more collaborative, unafraid of hiring their successors, and viewed leadership as an ongoing process that focused on improving organizational performance, not merely their own personal careers (Werhane et al., 2007).

As Nancy Adler put it some time ago:

The CEO of a global company cannot change her message for each of the countries and cultures in which her company operates. Global leaders, unlike domestic leaders, address people worldwide ... a fundamental distinction is that global leadership is neither domestic nor multi-domestic: It focuses on cross-cultural interaction. Thus global leaders must articulate and communicate a vision which, in and of itself is global ... and compelling to people from around the world (Adler, 1997, 175).

These are all characteristics of women in the North American study. We wondered if we would find similar characteristics in women leaders from other countries.

Interestingly, there are more than a few women leaders today in what may seem to be unlikely locations. We have recently interviewed five leading Japanese women and three Jordanians. We have also had opportunities to interview women leaders in India and the United Kingdom. This book, which tells the stories of these women, is intended for practitioners as well as academics who work in the leadership field. We want to thank all the women for agreeing to participate in this endeavor. We also want to thank Nobuko Hiwasa for introducing us to Japanese business leaders and Reem Abu Hassan for introducing us to Jordanian women leaders. We also want to thank Nicola Pleas and Manjit Monga for introductions to some outstanding women in India, and Olga Basirov, Maurine Murtaugh and Rosanna Peeling for introducing some outstanding women from the United Kingdom to our project. Finally, we want to thank Caroline Scullin for sharing her expertise in strategic communications.

Each woman we feature tells her story differently. Some have just allowed us to record their narratives; others have responded to questions to tell their stories. Each story is unique; each tells of a journey, not yet complete, that opens up a perspective on leadership in global political economies.

This book is aimed at a wide variety of readers – men and women students and faculty in academia, men and women in the workforce, men and women who are entrepreneurs, who engage in social ventures, and who work in government organizations. We hope that the stories of and insights from the women we feature will resonate with this wide audience. We thank Edward Elgar Publishers and their editors for encouraging us to write this book, with particular thanks to Karissa Venne and Michaela Doyle for their editorial assistance in guiding the project and Melanie Marshall for her copyediting skills. Finally, we thank all the women we featured in this volume for allowing us to include them.