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FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS: CURRENT TRENDS

The article deals with modern trends related to enchantment of female representation in politics. There are two main frameworks for analyses: the modern mechanisms of the gender quotas implementation and role models as the basis for female political leadership diffusion. The paper analyses three main types of gender measures: voluntary party quotas, candidate quotas, reserved seats mechanism. The author gives a brief review on the research results of the latest studies aimed to identify interrelation between the quota types and the number of elected women. This study has addressed several important factors, effecting gender quotas implementation, including type of electoral lists (open or closed), candidates' positions in the electoral list, and the number of mandates in the electoral district. Among factors that objectively affect women's representation in politics are considered demand for women's leadership and availability of successful role models. The article also reveals particularities of the introduction of gender quota system in Ukraine during the Local Council Deputies' Election in 2015.

Key words: gender, female representation, women in politics, role models, diffusion

One of the main modern trends in the women's political representation, widely introduced in the electoral process, is gender quotas. For the past 25 years more than a half of the world has implemented political gender quotas at the level of legislation as a result of a global social movement for women's political rights.

Gender voluntary party quotas at the time gained popularity among left-wing and centrist parties in many European countries, committed themselves to nominating a certain percentage of female candidates for electoral lists. In Sweden, for example, the party quota formula was introduced in 1970: «either of the sexes shall be represented by no less than 40 per cent on party» - causing an impressive growth in the number of women MPs in the country, comprised around 39% in 1988. The parties-pioneers, that introduced voluntary gender quotas, established a tradition for party gender quotation.

The quota system in the favorable socio-political environment proved to be successful for the implementation of gender equality policies in countries all over the world. The introduction of quotas was triggered by recommendations from international organizations and the dissemination of gender balance idea. However, gender quotas, enthusiastically adopted by the international community, often were opposed to the different political environments. For instance, despite the introduction of gender quotas, in particular countries women still have been almost entirely excluded from politics; on the contrary, there are a lot of countries with a long history of women's parliamentary representation.

However, quota systems in the Nordic countries can't be considered as universal model. It worth mentioning, that in Scandinavian countries women's entrance into the labor market in large numbers in the 1960s, the educational boom of the 1960s lead to rapid growth of women representation in politics. Thus in Scandinavian countries women's parliamentary representation already exceeded 25 % by the time of the electoral quotas introduction in 1980s, unlike many other modern countries, which started the legislative procedure of gender quotas implementation.

Gender quota policies encompass three types of measures: voluntary party quotas, candidate quotas, reserved seats mechanism. Essence of voluntary party quotas is commitment to nominate particular percentage of women in party lists on a voluntary basis. Candidate quotas or legislative quotas require nominating a certain proportion of women among candidates through regulations stipulated by the law. Regulations aimed at setting aside seats in the representative body for women provide reserved seats mechanism.

Each type of party quotas has both strong and weak sides. Thus efficiency of different quota types could be revealed through correlation between the quotas, stipulated by the law or established by voluntary party standards (for instance, 30 %), and the actual number of elected women.

The effect of the seats reservation, however, is distinct: such mechanism provides certain number of ensured seats. This gender quota is unconditionally equal to certain number of elected women or the real level of representation.

Voluntary party quotas remain prevalent in countries with a long history of women's participation in politics. Voluntary quotas declare the adoption of gender equality idea and parties' commitment to gender parity. There is a lack of reliable empirical evidence that would allow fully confirm the effectiveness of the introduction of voluntary party quotas. With regard to Ukraine, for instance, researchers encounter a problem with the accumulation of the information on party quotas, enshrined in parties' constituent documents, which are not always available online.

Rohini Pande and Deanna Ford consider party candidate quotas as less successful in terms of achieving the stated representative level. The introduction of the mandatory procedures for the inclusion of women in electoral lists does not guarantee that they will be elected, and their success is mostly determined by the type of electoral system.

Consistent with this view literature has upheld the assumption that introduction of legislative gender quotas in electoral systems of closed party lists provide higher rates of female representation than the one in the open-list electoral system¹.

Data analyses and based on it modern gender studies elaborate on the idea of gap reduction between women representation with open and closed party lists². According to the latest studies on this topic the effect of the legislative gender quotation could be determined by party magnitude - the number of seats that the party is expected to win in a district. The closed-list quota system outperforms the open-list quota system only when party magnitude is two³.

This pattern could be revealed through the party magnitude, particularly for parties with magnitude "one" strategically advantageous solution is to nominate popular candidate with high chances to be elected in particular district. Otherwise, when party magnitude is greater than one (the number of seats a party is expected to win in a district is one or more), nominating the second candidate to represent ethnic, gender or other minority is a reasonable electoral strategy.

Thus the distribution of positions in the party list, with due regard to gender quota regulations and statutory requirements, is determined by the party electoral PR strategy. Parties, enhancing women leadership and promoting women politicians, as a rule nominate them for favorable positions in the list that led to increase in women's representation.

As parties nominate the lowest positions in the list for women candidates, closed party list certainly would reduce women's chances to win elections. This case demonstrates how candidate quota system could be used for manipulation to limit the feasible level of women's presentation

Electoral quota system for certain effects the women's representation in politics, though this variable by far not a solitary one. Many authors emphasize the importance of role models in politics, aiming to inspire potential female candidates to run for office. The stories of political success motivate other women in politics to run for office at different levels. As more women are integrated in politics, encouraging others, the more would try to follow in their footsteps.

In line with this argument, several studies of role models in politics have shown that in average the number of female candidates running for office in a given unit increases with the number of women elected in other units⁴. In order to confirm this hypothesis Fabrizio Gilardi has carried out a research on the diffusion effect in women's representation. Intending to prove these arguments empirically, he analyzed an original data set of over 1,500 municipal elections in the Swiss canton of Zurich from 1970 to 2010, complemented with archival sources and a dozen interviews with female politicians.

Thus diffusion effect causes the shift in the perception of the idea of women's participation in politics. The more voters perceive positively females running for office, the more women would do the

¹ Gender Quotas and Female Leadership: *A Review Background Paper for the World Development Report on Gender* Rohini Pande and Deanna Ford, April 7, 2011.

<http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/rpande/files/gender_quotas_-_april_2011.pdf>.

² Jones, M. (2009). Gender Quotas, Electoral Laws, and the Election of Women: Evidence From the Latin American Vanguard. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42.

³ Jones, M. (2009). Gender Quotas, Electoral Laws, and the Election of Women: Evidence From the Latin American Vanguard. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42.

⁴ Gilardi, F. (2015). The Temporary Importance of Role Models for Women's Political Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 59, No. 4, October, 957-970.

same in nearby communities. According to the data obtained in this study the diffusion effect after the first election in the neighboring canton amounted to 10 percent. However, the relationship between female incumbents and candidates running for the office for the first time makes the diffusion effect much less distinguishable. Particularly, the effect increases permanently after fourth elections (approximately 16 years), this time is sufficient for the female leadership model acceptance.

Thus diffusion is determined by many factors apart from the number of women candidates in neighboring communities, and has a temporary effect. Despite role models are essential for the female leadership promotion, it is a methodologically difficult task to reveal positive correlation between role models and final electoral choice.

Considering abovementioned arguments, it must be inferred that role models are highly influential at the moment of their emergence. Although with the strengthening of positive female leadership perception in community, the effect enhanced by the gender role models gradually expires.

The identification of a diffusion effect in relation with the female role models is of a great practical significance for the relevant research on other underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, resident aliens, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, young adults, etc¹.

It's a matter of fact that quotas aimed to increase the political engagement of women in politics. Nevertheless the quota effect is likely to vary over time. Consistent with this view, Rikhil R. Bhavnani after examining an unusual natural experiment in India in which randomly chosen seats in local legislatures are set aside for women for one election at a time finds that even after gender quotas are withdrawn, female candidates still running for reelection, inspired by female incumbents². While quotas are extremely rarely withdrawn once they introduced, this experiment gives a unique opportunity to evaluate quota effect diffusion. The conclusion that must be made from this study is not solely about the quotas effect remaining after the withdrawal, but that quotas can set in motion processes that ensure the fairer representation of people and increases the number of females running for office.

Among factors that objectively affect the women's representation in politics, demand for women's leadership should be carefully considered as well. In many electoral systems party elites remain the most influential political agents or political "gate keepers" for such underrepresented groups like women. Due to this matter party quotas still remain one of the most effective remedy for promotion of balanced political representation. In addition, quotas tend to produce long lasting effect through enforcement of incumbents to run for re-elections that in certain circumstances could lead to essential increase in the number of women running for office, this number could even exceed the quota.

The party competition is an additional source for the inclusion of female candidates in electoral process and fostering demand for women leadership. This statement elaborates on the idea that party competition is basic democratic value, essential for pluralistic party system. As parties tend to expand the spectrum of their voters, they are likely to benefit from the experience and best practices of their competitors, such as an introduction of voluntary party quotas. The introduction of gender quotas triggers the diffusion effect. To some extent party elites forced to introduce voluntary party quotas under the pressure of public opinion and party ratings. Parties advocating gender quotas and female political leadership first of all declare commitment to democratic ideals of gender equality, moreover parties joined in a goodwill message supporting female political representation seek for appreciation from other political minorities as well.

The type of electoral system and peculiarities of electoral process (whether it is proportional or majority voting system) determine the demand for female leadership.

The effectiveness of the implementation of gender quotas depends on the type of electoral list (closed, open), candidates' positions in the electoral list, the number of mandates in the electoral district, etc.

The subjective psychological and resource factors along with objective factors such as demand for female representation and limitations of particular electoral system create a dynamic picture of parity.

In Ukraine the representation of women has improved sharply since the introduction of legislative quotas, particularly after Ukraine become a party to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

¹ Gilardi, F. (2015). The Temporary Importance of Role Models for Women's Political Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 59, No. 4, October, 957-970.

² Bhavnani, R.R. (2009). Do electoral quotas work after they are withdrawn? Evidence from a natural experiment in India *American Political Science Review*, 103(1), 23-35.

Equal political rights and opportunities for both women and men are stipulated in the eponymous Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men Act, Political Parties in Ukraine Act, Local elections Act. Legislator establishes the parity principle in the obligation for parties to include at least 30 percent of men or women for the Local Council Deputies' elections in multi-member constituencies. Moreover each party is obligated to stipulate gender quota in parties' constituent documents, with should amount to no less than 30 percents of all the candidates in the party electoral list.

Gender quotas reflected in the Ukrainian legislation is still of declarative nature. As a result, the implementation of gender quotas in the Local Council elections in 2015 was haphazard, particularly at the stage of candidates' registration.

There were ambiguities in work of the Electoral commission, a body vested with the responsibility to make decisions regarding the compliance of the parties' documents with the requirement on gender quotation. Although the Local elections Act implements the requirement for parties to include at least 30 percent of men or women in candidates' list for the Local Council Deputies' elections, there is no lawful ground for the denial of registration provided party doesn't follow regulations in gender quotation. Thus the failure to comply with the law on gender quotation in the Local Council Elections wasn't considered as a sufficient reason to refuse in registration by the Central Elections Commission as set out in the Resolution № 362 of 23 September 2015.

Such a gap in the legislation resulted in numerous applications to court. In the lead-up to the 2015 elections the Kyiv Administrative Court had considered two almost identical administrative lawsuits on the enforcement of the Resolution № 362 and issued two controversial decisions.

Regarding first case, the court decision was based on mandatory quota regulation on gender composition within electoral process concerning registration of parties' lists of candidates, formalized in paragraph 4 of the Resolution № 362. According to the second court decision the nomination of candidates in electoral lists in compliance with gender quota at the stage of candidate's registration is in party's sole discretion as the law provides no sanctions for non compliance.

Thus provision on gender quotation has a merely declarative character, and doesn't contain obligations vis a vis political parties to nominate women candidates for positions in electoral lists. Obstacles posed by disparate laws, conflicting interpretation and application of the gender quota provisions exacerbated the problem of gender quota implementation in Ukraine; meanwhile the gender balance question remains open.

For all the reasons mentioned, the implementation of gender-equal provisions within electoral process remains the prerogative of parties' leaders, enacting inner party regulations on gender balance.

The picture of recent political recruitment could be revealed thought analyses of the independent reports on this issue.

According to the data presented by the Committee of Voters of Ukraine within the framework of gender monitoring of Local Council Deputies' elections in 2015, only 23 out of 123 parties that have taken part in elections appointed women to high-level positions in the parties' lists. Stipulation of quotas in parties' regulatory documents was another subject of the monitoring, Only 38 % of parties' documents could be observed online, and only 13 among them contained provisions on the introduction of gender quotas in the electoral process.

In general, female representation in politics depends on wide range of factors such as the general endeavor of political parties towards establishment of the gender equality balance, the electoral and political systems' structure, the efficiency and transparency of the decision making process in politics. Parties as the legitimate channel of social mobility remain the most influential actors in regard to the gender quota implementation. Parties have tools to increase as well as to reduce chances of candidates to gain a success in the elections regardless their sex. Under the current electoral system, it is presupposed that self-nomination couldn't be considered within The Local Council Deputies' Elections. Thus taking into consideration the importance of financial support for candidates, 2015 elections were dominated by the political parties significant strengthening. Party's leaders could equally contribute to the settlement of parity problems or provoke gender discrimination.

Quotas can not be an ultimate solution for balanced political representation. When it comes to voluntary party gender quotas, their effectiveness depends on the overall perception of female leadership in society, last but not least factor is women's activity in political life. Even the introduction of the regulations on gender equality in electoral law can't be considered as effective and permanent solution. Unfortunately,

the majority of parties aiming to comply with the current legislation on registration for the elections carry out requirements on purely formal basis.

While it is true that female political leadership in Ukraine experienced significant growth and that the political history of independent Ukraine provides numerous examples of successful female politicians such as the former Prime Minister Julia Timoshenko, however, women in politics are unequally represented thought the political system (at the different levels of elected bodies). It is equally true that women more frequently than man confront such a problem as a lack of recourses for the electoral purposes.

Generally speaking, the model of political recruiting could be presented through engagement of female activists and so-called «gate-keepers», both of which follow certain regulations in accordance with particular electoral, legal and party systems. Moreover an important prerequisite for the establishment of a gender balance in the electoral process is women's willingness to run for office and active successful minority women politicians considered as role models.

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