

**Rethinking the concept of advancing women participation in political parties through
quotas: Ukraine's perspective**

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“We need more consensus-builders, we need people who will listen more, who are less ego-driven and partisan.

I really believe if you had 51 percent women in Congress,
the whole dynamic would change.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand¹

¹ Rogers, Abby, The Most Empowering Quotes From Women In Politics On Why Girls Are Awesome (A PLUS, Aug. 4, 2015), <http://aplus.com/a/female-empowerment-strong-women?no_monetization=true>.

The degree of involvement of women in political participation and access to decision-making can be considered as a key indicator of gender equality in a particular society. Gender equality in decision-making should be considered in terms of whether women hold positions allowing them to make a difference: to make decisions or influence the process of decision-making on an equal basis with men.² Gender issues have an impact on all aspects of the electoral process.

1995 Beijing Platform stresses that equality in decision-making is an integral part of the recognition of women's rights and that an equal participation of women in decision-making is not only a requirement of ordinary justice or democracy but also is a necessary condition for consideration of the interests of women.³ The Platform for Action also points out that the case of both genders participating in the decision-making process is not only fair, but also cost-effective solution, and that

² Участь жінок у політиці та процесі прийняття рішень в Україні. Стратегії впливу (Український жіночий фонд), <<http://www.osce.org/uk/odihr/85975?download=true>> (Uchast zhinok u politytsi ta protsesi pryynyattya rishen v Ukraini. Stratehiyi vplyvu (Ukrayinskyu zhinochyu fond), <<http://www.osce.org/uk/odihr/85975?download=true>>) [The participation of women in politics and decision-making in Ukraine].

³ Пекін +15 і Україна: Міжнародні зобов'язання і практики впровадження / упорядника О.Сулова – Київ: СПД Москаленко О.М., 2010 (Pekin +15 i Ukrayina: Mizhnarodni zobov'yazannya i praktyky vprovadzhennya / uporyadnytsya O.Suslova – Kyiv: SPD Moskalenko O.M., 2010) [Beijing +15 and Ukraine: International commitments and implementation practices].

the lack of women in politics leads to the fact that their interests are likely not to be counted. Women's representation and participation in decision-making at all levels are essential in achieving the goals of equality, development and peace.

Is there a problem at all with women in politics...in the second decade of the 21st century...?

Surprisingly, women in politics face numerous barriers to their advancement, including cultural biases, financial resources, and at-home responsibilities. In recent decades, those barriers have been reduced but women are far from having political parity with men: they hold today less than a fourth of the seats in national legislatures and in some countries, few if any seats are held by women. To expand women's agency, more women are needed in public office.⁴

This is alarming, taking into account that full involvement and equal participation of women in conflict resolution and subsequent peace-building would help to achieve durable peace, which also should be noted by Ukraine in its post-conflict resolution. In general, there is an emphasis on elections in this process, which acknowledges that popularly

⁴ Social Media: Advancing Women in Politics? (WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS GLOBAL FORUM, Oct., 2016), <http://www.womeninparliaments.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/WIP-Harvard-Facebook-Study_Oct2016.pdf>.

supported, legitimate institutions can be a key to lasting solutions to conflicts. Only when institutions are democratic and representative of all groups in society of women as well as men, minorities as well as majorities, the dispossessed as well as the affluent are stable peace and national prosperity likely to be achieved.⁵

What recommendations have been worked out to tackle the problem?

Among the most relevant recommendations, one should name the effort of the UN in this regard. Among the most crucial, one should mention: “in proportional systems, place women contenders high enough on the candidate lists to ensure they will be elected, including through such mechanisms as “zippered” lists, and consider voluntary quotas or targets for women candidates; in majority systems, establish voluntary targets or quotas to ensure a specified minimum number of women are put forward as candidates; provide support and resources to ensure the election of women candidates; to be sure that women are fully represented in the party leadership and policy committees; clearly identify the advancement of women and issues of special

⁵ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Women and Elections* (UN, 2015) <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/WomenAndElections.pdf>>.

concern to women as priorities in their platforms”.⁶

It also requires efforts on the part of government actors, who should ensure that political party laws and other election-related legislation do not indirectly disadvantage women; consider legislation requiring political parties to adopt democratic procedures for their internal operations; consider temporary special measures requiring political parties to include a substantial proportion of women high on their candidate lists; provide incentives for political parties to promote women candidates, including resources, training and increased access to broadcast time. Providing increased airtime for women in politics between elections could also advance women’s participation by enabling voters to make informed assessments at election time of the overall performance of political parties, including their support of women who have been elected as representatives.⁷

Apropos, UN’s recommendations for political participation of women are as relevant for post-conflict countries, which primarily require determined efforts not only by women themselves, but also by Governments, the international community and civil society. Actions by political parties are particularly important. Some steps that can be taken by each of these groups are listed below.

⁶ Political Participation, (UN), <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm>>.

⁷ Ibid.

A glance at social media

It is crucial to emphasize the role of media in this regard, as it also could do a lot to provide gender-sensitive coverage of elections, avoiding negative stereotypes and presenting positive images of women as leaders; provide women candidates with at least as much airtime and print space as that given to men; focus attention on issues of special concern to women in news programming; undertake voter and civic education programmes aimed specifically at women.

As the global network of female politicians with the mission to increase their number and influence across the globe, the Women in Parliaments Global Forum ('WIP') tried to answer this question in its 2015 study, "The Female Political Career".⁸ Not surprisingly, the representation of women leaders in traditional media was highlighted as one of the obstacles to gender parity.⁹ The same is related to social media, which truly can be named the fruit of progress and result of highly intense development of information and communication technologies. They may even influence public opinion even more than media today. Social media have augmented rather than supplanted traditional media as a political tool. Both forms of media can con-

⁸ WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS GLOBAL FORUM, supra note 4.

⁹ Political Participation, supra note 6.

tribute to political success, and our survey asked respondents to judge the comparative advantages of the two mediums [and social media, p. 23].

For instance, the role of such platform as Facebook, which permeates every sphere of our life today is difficult to underestimate today. However, Female lawmakers, still underrepresented globally in politics, have utilized Facebook to break down traditional gender barriers. Regardless of their age, whether their party was in power or not, and many other factors, the overwhelming majority of these lawmakers considered Facebook as a key tool to connect directly with people, allowing for a dialogue that is efficient, frequent and unfiltered.¹⁰

What about good old quotas?

One of the options to practically approach the issue of attracting women in politics is to implement gender quotas in legislation. By definition, quota as a compensatory measure aims at overcoming obstacles to the entry of women in the power system is a "form of political rapidity in solving pressing social and humanitarian issues in respect of state and social status of men and women".¹¹

¹⁰ WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS GLOBAL FORUM, supra note 4, p. 6.

¹¹ Мельник Т. М. Гендер у політиці / Основи теорії гендера: навчальний посібник. – К.: «К.І.С.», 2004. – С. 248 (Melnyk T.M. Gender u politytsi / Osnovy teoriyi hendera: navchalnyy

One should also mention that according to the wide-range study of the London School of Economics and Political Science, gender quotas should be mandatory for senior positions across the private and public sectors in Britain to boost the number of women in high-powered positions.¹² Among its key proposals, the authors of the study recommend that “each political party should adopt quotas to boost the number of female MPs [Members of the Parliament] and ensure more balanced representation in decision-making. Parliament should pass legislation establishing a maximum limit on the proportion of MPs of either sex allowed to stand for general election, the study finds, beginning with a maximum of 70% of male candidates in each political party in the first general election following the legislation, reduced to 60% in the following election”.¹³

Gender-sensitive politics and equal access of women and men in decision-making at the state level ensures a uniform representation of different social groups. Therefore, when it comes to Ukraine, gender quotas have been turned to as a tool to attract women into

posibnyk. – K.: «K.I.S.», 2004. – S. 248) [Melnyk, Gender in Politica].

¹² Gentleman, Amelia, LSE study calls for gender quotas to place women in positions of power (The Guardian, Oct. 12, 2015), <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/oct/13/lse-study-gender-quotas-positions-power-women>>.

¹³ Gender Institute, Gender, Inequality and Power Commission (LSE, Feb. 2, 2017), <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/genderInstitute/research/commission/home.aspx>>.

politics. However, breaking the status quo in Ukrainian politics turned out to be not as easy, although “belated” integration of women in politics by introducing gender quotas party received considerable attention in the public discourse on the eve of local elections of 2015.¹⁴

In 2015, the 30 percent gender quota was fixed in respective legislation and extended to the level of local elections. In particular, the Law of Ukraine “On Local Elections” adopted on July 14, 2015 in the Art. 4 “Equal Suffrage” enshrined as follows: “... All candidates have equal rights and opportunities to participate in the electoral process of the relevant local elections. The representation of individuals of the same gender in the electoral lists of candidates for deputies of local councils in multi-member districts must be at least 30 percent of candidates in the electoral list”.¹⁵ Local elections of October 25, 2015 were the first elections in Ukraine to

¹⁴ Троян І. Гендерні квоти проти статус-кво: доступ жінок до політики (Журнал соціальної політики «Спільне»), <<http://commons.com.ua/ru/genderni-kvoti-proti-statusu-kvo-dostup-zhinok-do-politiki/>> (Trojan I. Henderni kvoty proty statusu-kvo: dostup zhinok do polityky (Zhurnal sotsialnoyi polityky «Spilne»), <<http://commons.com.ua/ru/genderni-kvoti-proti-statusu-kvo-dostup-zhinok-do-politiki/>>) [Trojan I. Gender quotas against the status quo, women’s access to politics].

¹⁵ Закон України «Про місцеві вибори» від 14.07.2015 № 595-VIII, <<http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/595-19>> (Zakon Ukrainy «Pro mistsevi vybory» vid 14.07.2015 № 595-VIII, <<http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/595-19>>) [The Law of Ukraine “On Local Elections”].

be held with adhering to gender quotas in electoral legislation.

What are the prerequisites for such legislation amendments? According to the 2014 report on global gender gap, Ukraine ranked 56 among 142 with the largest gender gap of inequality in such areas as economics, education, health and politics.¹⁶ The most striking gender inequality was observed exactly in politics – 105th place in the world. The figure is surprising taking into account that Ukrainian women are well-educated and economically active. This data is supplemented by other: Ukrainian women have no proper representation and influence in the government - Ukraine is ranked 82nd in the number of female officials in the government. The gender inequality review of 2015,¹⁷ reflecting aspects of human development such as reproductive health, economic status and empowerment of women compared with men, ranks Ukraine 83d out of 150 countries. This index helps to identify those areas that require political intervention, and such low figures should encourage Ukraine to overcome existing gender inequalities.¹⁸ These data is especially puzzling if to find out that Afghanistan

has a larger percentage of women in its national legislative body than, for example, the United States does. According to the 2015 analysis from the World Bank, 19.4 percent of American members of Congress were female compared to 28 percent of Afghanistan's national legislators. A 2015 report from the Pew Research Centre demonstrates that the U.S. ranked 83rd of 137 countries for its share of women holding office in a national legislature in 2014.¹⁹

Turning to practical application of gender quota in Ukraine, one should mention that they were lifted for candidates in local elections as one of the requirements. Analyzing the results of recent local elections, one should turn to the results of a survey, which showed that Ukrainian political parties assessed the adopted gender quotas rather positively giving respect for the pro-European policy and values and declaring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. One should stress on the fact that all parties interviewed spoke favourably about gender policy in general and noted on certain aspects of the integration of women into their party structures, in particular.²⁰ As a result, there is a

¹⁶ Global Gender Gap Report 2014, Ukraine, <<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=UKR>>.

¹⁷ Gender Inequality Index, Human Development Reports (United Nations Development Programme), <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>>.

¹⁸ Human Development Reports (United Nations Development Programme, 2015), <<http://hdr.undp.org/en>>.

¹⁹ O'Brien, Diana Z.; Rickne, Johanna. "Gender Quotas and Women's Political Leadership," *American Political Science Review*, 2016, Vol. 110.

²⁰ Марценюк Т. Чи спрацює гендерна квота на місцевих виборах 2015 року? (Міжнародний центр перспективних досліджень, 2015), р. 16, <<http://www.ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/handle/123456789/6460>> (Martsenyuk T. Chy spratsyuye henderna kvota na mistsevykh vyborakh 2015 roku? (Mizhnarodnyy tsentr perspektyvnykh doslidzhen, 2015), р. 16,

declared commitment to the 30 percent gender quota in local elections. However, another question is whether this declaration was implemented and whether one could speak about actual compliance with quotas. In fact, none of the surveyed parties did not provide precise data on the gender composition of the party at various levels, obviously to avoid elaborating on the problem of vertical gender segregation, which is visible even from party sites (e.g. there are few women among party leaders and women in the rank of governing structures of the parties).²¹

Interestingly, the Central Election Committee of Ukraine notes that among 86 lists led by women in 5 cases, one and the same female candidate listed the party headed to the city and regional councils.²² In 15 cases, female leader of the list was both nominated by the party for mayor of the city, or the regional centre. In two cases, a female candidate was once the leader in the list of the regional council, the leader of the list in the city council, and nominated for mayor of the

<<http://www.ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/handle/123456789/6460>> [Martsenyuk T. Will gender quota work in local elections of 2015].

²¹ Ibid.

²² КВУ: для виконання квоти «по суті» необхідні передумови – допуск жінок до керівних посад в партіях та висування лідерами списків / Комітет виборців України, 30.11.2015. – 3 с. (KVU: dlya vykonannya kvoty «po suti» neobkhdni peredumovy – dopusk zhinok do kerivnykh posad v partiyakh ta vysuvannya lideramy spyskiv / Komitet vybortsiv Ukrainy, 30.11.2015. – 3 s.) [Committee of voters of Ukraine on election of women with quotas in Ukraine].

party (Svetlana Fabrikant of party “Revival” and Elena Alekseenko of party “Patriot” ran for Odessa oblast and the city of Odessa). It has been suggested that the simultaneous nomination of candidates from the party as the leader of the two lists or list as a leader and candidate for mayor, shows, on the one hand, the significant support from the party and simultaneously increases the chances of nominating candidates to be elected. On the other hand, this indicates that the level of political parties which nominate women as leaders is actually even lower.

The active participation of women in intra party activities could promote their broader representation in the local councils. Although that requirement of representation of women in legislative councils has been duly fixed on paper, yet practical implementation of this requirement has not been brilliant. Thus, the Committee of Voters of Ukraine stressed that the formal implementation of quotas in the registration of lists of candidates is not enough to ensure equal opportunities for women to participate in political life.²³ The Central Election Committee of Ukraine urges political parties to be more open to the participation of women in the governing bodies of the party at the central level and in local

²³ Гендерні квоти. Участь жінок у виборах, <<http://www.prostir.ua/?news=genderni-kvoty-uchast-zhinok-u-vyborah>> (Genderni kvoty. Uchast zhinok u vyborakh, <<http://www.prostir.ua/?news=genderni-kvoty-uchast-zhinok-u-vyborah>>) [Gender quotas. Participation of women in elections].

communities. It is suggested that implementation of sanctions for failure to comply with quotas should be considered as additional incentives.

Do quotas work?

In 2016, the American Political Science Review published a specific study on this issue – “Gender Quotas and Women’s Political Leadership.” The authors examined 15 years of data on local leadership appointments in Sweden’s largest political party and focused on political leadership before and after the Swedish Social Democratic Party imposed a gender quota on 290 municipal branches of the party in 1994.

The study’s key findings include:

- “Having a gender quota helped women to obtain party leadership positions. The quota “both immediately and permanently improved women’s access to leadership positions in municipalities where fewer women had previously held elected office.

- Having a quota did not seem to influence women’s chances of maintaining a leadership post once they acquired it.

- Having a gender quota strengthened the pool of qualified women eligible for party leadership roles. More qualified, better educated women entered politics after the quota was implemented relatively to the number of qualified men.

- The quota did not increase the diversity of women in leadership roles with respect to age, education or income. Overall, the generational, educational and income levels of women in power remained unchanged before and after the quota.”²⁴

Conclusion

Thus, quotas, as one of the most popular method to enhance women participation in political decision-making, are likely to facilitate the promotion of women, which can in turn have tremendous symbolic and practical consequences as by improving access of female politicians to leadership positions, quotas likely have knock-on effects related to the selection of political candidates and the appointment of ministers. In general, the active participation of women in politics is perceived as positive, which have particularly positive effects for post conflict societies.

As for Ukraine, the 2015 election is a defining moment for the increase of the electoral representation of women, and consideration of a wide range of issues, including the representation of women in electoral management bodies, party procedures and running of the election campaign, voter education, the obstacles in the course of voting and the conditions of financing election campaigns. Though the effects of implementing the quotas in Ukrainian legislation are still to be as-

²⁴ O’Brien, supra note 19.

sessed in the perspective because it is too early to estimate, Ukraine still needs to learn from the experience of other states and continue raising awareness of positive role of women in politics and general decision-making should still take place. Besides, the role of women could be particularly positive in the post-conflict resolution in Ukraine.