

The Political Value of Women Candidates:
An Analysis of the Strategic Adoption of Gender Quotas

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Prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association in
Vancouver, BC on April 13-15, 2017.

First Draft! Please do not cite without author's permission

Introduction

In recent years, one of the most popular ways of addressing the lack of women in politics has been the adoption of a gender quota. In its most common form, a gender quota is a requirement that an election for political office includes a minimum percentage of women candidates. But there are many variations on this theme – for example, this requirement could be an official law of the state that all parties must adhere to (i.e., a “legislated quota”), or it can be proposed as an internal party regulation that only applies to the party that specifically adopted it (i.e., a “voluntary quota”). Further, there are also many differences in the penalties assessed to those political parties that fail to adhere to the gender quota of their country. Some legislated gender quotas require only a small financial penalty if the law is violated (e.g., France), while others penalize the parties that violate the quota by rejecting their candidate lists and thus preventing them from winning any seats (e.g., Belgium). Yet, while their designs can differ dramatically, one theme is clear – gender quotas are ubiquitous on the world stage.

Scholars have demonstrated that there are many factors that impact whether a state or political party adopts a gender quota (see Krook 2009 for an overview), and this paper offers a new thread to that existing research. I argue that gender quotas are more likely to be adopted when a government or political party can strategically benefit from associating itself with women. That is, because women are stereotyped as more honest, inclusive, and democratic than men, then there are certain political contexts in which associating with women can be beneficial to the party or government; the adoption of a gender quota, in short, has the potential to be strategic feminization by association. I offer two political contexts in which, according to my argument, there is an incentive for parties and governments to associate themselves with women: first, after a massive corruption scandal breaks. And second, when a hybrid regime is shifting

further away from democratic ideals. To illustrate, I discuss the process of gender quota adoption in Italy, Argentina, and Bangladesh, and suggest that the elites in all of these countries strategically adopted a quota so as to change the public's perception of the government. Finally, I offer two exceptions to my theory, and illustrate them with a small analysis of Russia and the Central African Republic.

Focused Literature Review and Argument

Many scholars have analyzed the conditions under which a government is likely to adopt a gender quota, but one of the most relevant and prominent themes concerns the potential threat that results if a party refuses to adopt a voluntary gender quota. For example, one major thread addresses “contagion,” a process by which a small, fringe party adopts a gender quota, which in turn spurs the larger parties to also adopt voluntary gender quotas. Matland and Studlar (1996) argue that this effect is driven by a fear of losing voters and that: “Over time, as each party reacts to a felt *threat* from close political rivals on the issue of equity in representation, the perceived need to nominate women will flow across the political system to virtually all parties” (page 712, my emphasis). Baldez (2004) also notes the role of threat, explaining that “cross-partisan coalitions of female politicians who can credibly *threaten* to denounce their male colleagues as sexist for opposing quotas represent a powerful pro-quota force...Parties have adopted gender quotas in order to avoid being publicly portrayed as chauvinist” (page 234, my emphasis).

However, while there is evidence that gender quotas are “contagious” among parties and also that the presence of women political elites increases the likelihood of quota adoption, there is little evidence that supports the causal theories described above. That is, there is no evidence that voters specifically retaliate against a party if they do not adopt a quota, nor is there evidence

that voters will react negatively to accusations of chauvinistic behavior. Instead, we have evidence that both male and female voters are sometimes troubled by quota adoption because it seems unfair or even unconstitutional (Guadagnini 2005; Lovenduski 1997). Further, based on the lack of support for legislation that disproportionately affects women (e.g., domestic violence and equal pay laws) as well as the general “boys-will-be-boys” attitude that permeates cultures around the world, there is little reason to believe that political elites conceptualize women as an interest group as powerful enough to merit a “threat.” Instead, as the nearly 63 million citizens who voted for Donald Trump showed us, even a candidate that brags about sexually assaulting women can maintain the support of both men and women; while many people may care about equality in general, few would change a vote based solely on a candidate or party’s position on women’s equality.

Another prominent thread in the literature on quota adoption is the role of women’s groups. Women’s groups are described in the literature as both facilitating the mobilization of grassroots women’s movements that pressure elites to increase women’s participation (Beckwith 2003; Baldez 2004), as well as creating cross-partisan networks that offer opportunities to share successful quota adoption strategies (Bruhn 2003; Hassim 2002). However, as Krook (2009) explains, conceptualizing women as being a unified group in favor of quotas falls into the trap of essentialism. And further, building on the work of Schmidt (2003), Krook (2009) notes that:

“even in cases where a large number of women do support quotas, their proposals rarely gain consideration until at least one well-placed elite man embraces them and pressures his own party, or his own colleagues in parliament, to approve quotas for women” (page 22).

I do not mean to suggest that women’s groups or women party elites are unimportant in quota adoption. Rather, I argue that their importance is not based on any sort of “threat” or pressure on male elites. Women’s groups – both external and internal to government – do not

have the power or citizen support to credibly threaten party or government elites for a non-adoption decision; we have no direct evidence that voters punish political parties that decline to adopt quotas, nor do we have evidence that voters punish specific politicians who vote against quotas. Instead, I propose that we view the role of both women's groups and activists as more similar to lobbyists. The goal of a lobbyist is to secure a favorable policy outcome for the group that they represent; their success is rarely built on threats, but rather the promise of mutually-beneficial relationships. There are, of course, some interest groups that are powerful enough to credibly threaten legislators – the National Rifle Association in the US, for example, employs lobbyists that can utilize threats of voter backlash to motivate legislators. However, the NRA represents an issue with high salience, which means they can credibly threaten that voters may change their vote based on this issue alone. Women's representation and equality in government, on the other hand, is an issue with low salience. There is no country in the world where even a small group of voters cares more about women's equality more than any other issue, and thus it would be surprising to see voters change their party or candidate allegiance based on this issue alone. For the issue of women's equality, therefore, it seems unlikely that threat plays a prominent role. Instead, it seems more realistic to conceptualize women's activists as playing the crucial roles of both raising the issue and convincing the men in power that there is a potential benefit of quota adoption to the party or government.

Another substantial thread in the literature on quota adoption addresses the use of quotas as a strategic effort to maintain or increase power. Many scholars offer evidence that gender quotas are sometimes adopted with no sincere commitment to women's representation, but instead as a strategy for consolidating power over the party or government (Bird 2003; Goetz and Hassim 2003; Baldez 2004) or because their adoption signals a commitment to democracy to the

international organizations making foreign aid decisions (Bush 2011). In addition, some scholars argue that quotas are adopted as a strategic attempt to portray the political party as attentive to women's issues and thus garner more votes from women (Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Htun and Jones 2002). Thus, it appears that, while women's activists play an important role in quota adoption, another key component of a successful adoption concerns the strategic benefits to the political party or government in power.

Following that line of the literature, I argue that another potential strategic benefit of quota adoption is the association of the party or government with traditional feminine stereotypes. While the symbolic meaning of women varies across citizens, countries, and cultural spheres of influence, existing literature on stereotypes suggests that certain personality traits tend to be associated with women around the world. Some of the most common traits associated with women include being compassionate, honest, inclusive, and inherently democratic (Alexander & Andersen 1993; Kahn 1994; Huddy & Capelos 2002; Lawless 2004; Goetz 2007; Dolan 2010). These common stereotypes, I argue, not only affect the electoral fortunes of the women associated with them, but are also powerful enough to cause citizens to view women's presence as a signal about the institutions in which they participate - rather than guilt by association, this is a kind of feminization by association. These stereotypes, and thus women themselves, can be valuable to parties and governing elites, which in turn creates an incentive to both adopt a gender quotas and increase the proportion of women involved in an institution. To be clear, I am not arguing that voters are concerned with women's equality. Rather, I'm arguing that there are certain circumstances in which governments or political parties can cultivate legitimacy by appearing more honest or by creating the perception that they are embracing democratic principles of inclusion, and the adoption of a gender quota achieves those objectives. Women's

descriptive representation, in other words, can be strategically employed to feminize the perception of a government or political party.

While I argue that the symbolism of women's presence can be valuable to the state and political elites, it is critical to emphasize that its value is temporary and context-dependent. Existing scholarship demonstrates that feminine traits are not typically viewed as being essential to leadership. In fact, just the opposite is true – there is substantial evidence that feminine personality traits are “incongruent” with the usual citizen conceptualization of the ideal leader. Voters typically prefer their leaders to exhibit stereotypically masculine traits such as being assertive, competitive, forceful, and dominant (Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly and Carli 2007; Koenig et al. 2011). Under normal circumstances therefore, one should not expect women candidates to have an advantage in elections or to be recruited more than men.

Gender Quota Adoption in the Post-Scandal Environment

When a massive political corruption scandal is revealed, the legitimacy of the government is shaken to its core. Take, for example, a scenario in which multiple sitting members of the government and/or legislature are accused of accepting bribes in exchange for favorable policy decisions. This accusation of bribery goes beyond everyday clientelism – this is not just greasing the wheels – but rather a clear tit-for-tat exchange that implicates several high-ranking leaders of the state. In this scenario, citizens' worst fears about their government are confirmed; it becomes undeniable that their elected representatives broke a foundational principle of democracy by putting their own personal desires in front of the needs of their constituents. Even minor levels of corruption erode the legitimacy of the government (Seligson 2002), but this – this is the kind of scandal revelation that will damage the legitimacy of the

government for years. And thus, this is the moment when, I argue, the strategic value of women increases dramatically. In this particular context, when a government is brought to its knees by a massive political scandal, feminization is a solution to the loss of legitimacy.

Case Study: Italy

During the years of 1992-1994, Italians witnessed hundreds of resignations and arrests of government officials and representatives. Operation “mani pulite” (“clean hands”), a massive corruption probe that investigated and subsequently dismantled the Italian government, was in full swing during this period, implicating representatives in every level of government and from almost every party. Many legislators, both local and national, were involved in political scandals so outlandish that they are difficult to comprehend. For example, shortly after the legislative elections of 1992, a government commissioner was forced to take over the city council of Reggio Calabria following the arrests of 25 of its 50 members. The culmination of the “clean hands” fervor occurred in 1993, when Bettino Craxi, the leader of the Socialist Unity party and former prime minister, was forced to resign. In that same month, three cabinet ministers resigned due to suspicion of corruption, including the minister of justice. Less than four weeks later, two more ministers resigned, pushing the government to the brink of collapse.

Later that year, an electoral reform referendum was proposed to overhaul the electoral system used in the legislature and, due to the citizen frustration with one-party domination, clientelist behavior, and the subsequent corruption that had befallen their system, the referendum passed with 82.7% of the vote (Palici di Suni 2012). The new electoral system was majoritarian version of a mixed member system: 75% of the seats were allocated by plurality vote and 25% were allocated by closed-list proportional representation. Shortly after this referendum passed,

women representatives in the center-left coalition in the legislature proposed a bill that required the alternation of men and women candidates on party lists – i.e., a gender quota – for the seats elected using proportional representation and, even after some contentious debate, State Law No. 277/1993 passed (Weeks and Baldez 2015). And thus, in 1994, the first election after “manipulate,” a remarkable event occurred: the application of an effective gender quota drove the percentage of women in the Chamber of Deputies from 8.1% to 15.1%.

The passage of this effective gender quota law was surprising, to say the least. Why would the male representatives and party leaders allow a bill to be passed that, in the long term, posed a threat to their power? It could be argued, as discussed above, that women’s groups pressured legislators to vote in favor but, as Palici di Suni (2012) notes, “in Italy, due to women’s lack of cohesiveness and the technical nature of the issue, (the gender quota) did not receive the same level of visibility or have the same impact as other issues like abortion or sexual violence” (page 385). It is also unlikely that international pressure spurred the legislature into adopting the quota because Italy was not dependent on foreign countries or organizations for aid. And further, at this point in time, the international realm had yet to focus their attention on issues of gender parity, as this quota was adopted before both the The UN 1995 Beijing thing and the EU’s Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000. Finally, one can be confident that a sincere embrace of women’s political parity was not the reason why this quota was adopted because most of the legislators who supported the quota law believed that their high court would overturn it (Guadagnini 2005). And they were right: the gender quota was declared invalid by the Constitutional Court in 1995.

It is likely, therefore, that the unprecedented level of political scandal created a strong incentive for political elites to restore their legitimacy by associating themselves with women.

This was indeed the ideal environment for strategic feminization: by publicly adopting a gender quota, the government and political parties could cue voters that they were following a new path of more honesty and less greed. The experience of Giovanna Melandri, a legislator in the Italian Camera dei Deputati and a member of Prodi's cabinet from 2006-2008, supports this claim. In her campaign in the legislative election of 1994, Melandri ran with a slogan that called attention to her gender as well as to the stereotype that women are honest: "parola dei donna" – translated as "the word of the woman." When I interviewed her about this race, she explained that she chose that slogan because "after the corruption scandals... being a woman was something which was useful." In future races, however, her slogans emphasized neither her gender nor any stereotypes about honesty. She explained that "in 1994/95, it (being a woman) was a benefit- I think it's not a benefit anymore... women are considered too naïve, they don't exercise power. You need to be harsh and hard-hearted."¹

Case Study: Argentina

As Balán (2011) discusses in his analysis of corruption scandals in Argentina, the years of 1989-1991 were exceptional in terms of corruption revelations. By his count, ten major political scandals came to light during this two-year period, many of which directly involved the sitting President, Carlos Menem. These scandals include the Swift-Armour incident, in which President Menem's brother-in-law demanded a bribe from an American firm in return for a permit to import machinery for a factory in Argentina, the jailing of the National Director of Water Resources for suspicion of laundering drug money, the accusation that the leader of the Peronist block in the lower house of the legislature was involved in a multi-million dollar fraud

¹ Melandri, Giovanna. Personal interview. 25 May 2005.

incident at the state-run petro-chemical plant, and the revelation that Eduardo Menem, who was the leader of the Senate as well as President Menem's younger brother, had a secret and significant bank account in Uruguay stocked with US dollars.²

Citizens responded to the revelations of corruption scandals with frustration and dread; not since the "Dirty War" had they seen this level of corruption in government, and thus they were deeply disturbed by it. In April 1991, a poll revealed that "more than half the population thinks corruption has never been worse and 66% believe Menem's assault on it is only a public relations exercise."³ Even the Catholic Church expressed dismay: in November of 1990, the president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Monseñor Antonio Quarraccino, stated that that Argentina had become "the paradise of swindlers and opportunists, who take shelter under the rumpled mantle of liberty and democracy."⁴ President Menem responded to the growing discontent with constant denials, but also with action: he fired countless ministers and advisors in order to shift the blame away from himself, and declared that the new focus of the Justice Ministry was to spearhead an anti-corruption campaign.⁵

In November 1991, the first legislated gender quota in the world – the *ley de cupos* – passed in the Argentine parliament. The law required that a minimum of 30% of the candidates on the party lists be women and that, because they employed a closed-list system to elect their lower house, these women be placed in electable positions on the lists (Jones 1998). The law passed, according to Krook (2009), "due to combined pressure from women's groups and from

² "From a small seed authoritarianism grows" By GARY MEAD *Financial Times*. May 8, 1990.

³ "Menem's clean image burns as Argentina fiddles" By JOHN BARHAM *Financial Times* April 3, 1991.

⁴ "Argentine Union Leader Blunt About Payoffs." *New York Times*. By SHIRLEY CHRISTIAN, November 25, 1990

⁵ "Menem moves to restore his image; A bribery case has confirmed the public's cynical view of political morality." By MARTIN GRANOVSKY and COLIN HARDING. *The Independent*. January 19, 1991.

then-President Carlos Saúl Menem” (page 166). The role of President Menem in the passage of this bill is significant: before his intervention, there was widespread acceptance that the bill would not pass. In fact, the legislators were so confident that this bill would fail that the parties didn’t even bother to establish an official position for or against the quota (Chama 2001). On the night of the vote, President Menem was alerted that the bill would fail, and thus sent his Interior Minister to the Chamber of Deputies to instruct the legislators of his party (who held the majority) to vote in favor of the bill (Krook 2009). The legislators followed his instructions and, to everyone’s surprise, the bill passed.

While we will never really know why Menem decided to intervene and ensure the passage of the gender quota law, it seems likely that strategy was at the heart of his decision. Carlos Menem was no angel; he showed no significant interest in women’s advancement before this law. As Krook (2009) describes, “it was an unusual step by Menem who, both before and after the quota law, sided decisively with conservative groups on issues related to women’s status” (page 170). And, while women’s groups were critically important in their efforts to raise this possibility and draw attention to the issue of equality in governance, there is no evidence that suggests that Menem felt any sort of electoral threat from them. Thus, it seems possible that Menem saw this gender quota as a way to strategically associate himself and his party with women, and to thus counteract the legitimacy losses sustained by the corruption scandals. By adopting this gender quota, in other words, Menem appeared to be embracing the ideals of honesty and inclusion associated with women and thus, without making any substantive changes at all in his corrupt political practices, he gave the impression that his regime would be less corrupt in the future.

Gender Quota Adoption in Hybrid Regimes

A hybrid regime is in a precarious position. This type of regime is not democratic enough to rely upon free and fair elections to cultivate legitimacy, while not authoritarian enough to utilize only coercive practices to maintain its authority in the eyes of citizens. Thus, as Diamond (2002) argues, hybrid regimes feel a strong pressure to “mimic” the democratic form (page 24); this regime, in other words, has a powerful incentive to appear more democratic than it actually is in an effort to cultivate legitimacy. Because women are associated with honesty, cooperation, and democracy in general, their value increases when a regime wants to signal a new dedication to those traits without actually making substantive changes to its behavior. Thus, I argue that the adoption of a gender quota can be a strategic maneuver designed to affect the public’s perception of the government and cultivate legitimacy. In other words, a hybrid regime – and particularly one that is shifting further away from democratic principles – can proactively manage its legitimacy by adopting a gender quota, and will do this even if they have no concern for women’s political equality. I offer a case study of Bangladesh, and argue that their transition away from democracy created a strong incentive to adopt a gender quota. However, it is important to note that not all countries may find a strategic benefit to feminizing, particularly if the regime rests on hyper-masculine principles. Thus, I also discuss the cases of Russia and the Central African Republic, both of which experienced declines in their levels of democratization but, according to my argument, did not adopt a gender quota due to the unique and extreme role of masculinity in their respective regimes.

Case Study: Bangladesh

Since gaining its independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh has endured multiple

military coups, political assassinations, and general instability. While the country was able to transition away from military rule and toward democracy in 1991, it was far from consolidated; extreme clientelism, a venomous dynamic between the two major parties, and slow but steady increases in political violence and religious militancy consistently undermined its stability. And after the election of 2001, Bangladesh shifted even further away from its democratic potential in several ways: First, while the system still allowed competition between the two major parties, both of these parties spent significant amounts of the decade boycotting the legislature (and therefore disempowering it). Second, restrictions on the press increased during this decade and, in 2003, the government began detaining journalists and editors who reported unfavorable news (Freedom House 2004). In addition, under the guise of “Operation Clean Heart” – an anti-crime initiative created in 2002, the army arrested 11,000 people, including several major political figures (Freedom House 2004). Shortly thereafter, the government also arrested the president of one of Bangladesh’s largest anti-poverty NGOs and, while the charge was embezzlement, this man had been a popular and well-known critic of the government.⁶ Finally, the years 2001-2006 marked a time of unprecedented politicization of the bureaucracy. Osman (2010) explains that, during this period:

“the regime employed a laboratory to search for the loyal officials and also the disloyal. Explaining the process, a bureaucrat said, ‘People having green signal in the software were promoted while those with red signals indicating the disloyal were dropped’” (page 321).

The government was using the bureaucracy to advance its objectives; the goal was not to implement the law fairly and evenly, but rather to politicize the bureaucracy enough to ensure that policy outcomes benefitted the government. During this decade, therefore, it is clear that

⁶ “Bangladesh Arrests Director of Major Anti-Poverty Organization.” By Amy Waldman. *New York Times*. May 25, 2004.

Bangladesh was a classic hybrid regime.

The status of women in Bangladesh is complicated, to say the least. Two women have served as prime ministers, but both had significant familial legacies in politics. Further, Bangladesh is a religious country - about 90% of the citizens identify as Muslim – all women leaders in this country must navigate the difficult balance of being both pious to a very traditional, patriarchal religion (e.g., observing the Islamic dress code of covering their heads in public and attending patriarchal religious functions (Chowdhury 2009)), while also demonstrating that they could be effective politicians. In addition, while the percentage of literate women is only about 53% as of 2008,⁷ the government constructed a comprehensive bureaucracy to further the advancement of women in society and politics (Khan et al. 2005). It would thus be a mistake to conceptualize Bangladesh as completely exclusionary of women's leadership, but also an error to argue that the political culture is inclusionary to women.

The first constitutional gender quota in Bangladesh was introduced in 1972, only one year after independence. Since then, a gender quota has been present in almost every legislative election, and the quota has typically taken the form of reserved seats - i.e., a percentage of seats in the legislature that are specifically reserved for women, and thus only women can run in the elections for those seats. In May of 2004, a constitutional amendment passed that raised the percentage of reserved seats for women to 45 seats or about 13% of the legislature – its highest level ever.⁸

The adoption of this quota at this moment in time has several possible explanations. First, following the logic of Bush (2011), this could have been a maneuver to please international aid organizations. This is entirely plausible; Bangladesh is a very poor country and does receive

⁷ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/literacy-statistics-trends-1985-2015.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.quotaproject.org/country/bangladesh>

foreign aid, so it seems likely that international aid played a role in their decision to adopt the new quota. However, because of the relatively small amount of aid that the country receives, it is unlikely that this is the primary causal driver. For example, the *World Bank* tracks the net official development assistance received as a % of its Gross National Income and, in 2001, Bangladesh's development assistance was 1.8% of its GNI and increased to 2.1% in 2008. Another measure of foreign aid, the net official development assistance per capita, was 7.8% in 2001 and increased to 13.9% in 2008.⁹ These increases are not unimportant, but it is critical to note that foreign aid increased in general during the past 15 years, and that many countries receive dramatically higher levels of development assistance. In fact, I could find only four other hybrid regimes with similarly low levels of foreign aid: Egypt, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Russia. In addition, while this quota may have been adopted due to pressure from women's groups, there is no evidence that women's groups exerted a strong enough threat that they could have compelled the government to accept a gender quota. Finally, we can be certain that the quota was not adopted due to a sincere commitment to the advancement of women due to its design. Women legislators in the reserved seats are not treated as equals but rather, as Chowdhury (2009) explains:

“the female Members of Parliament from the reserved seats were considered as mere ‘ornaments’ due to the absence of any effective participation by them in parliament. This arrangement does not represent women's electorate and the female members do not have any influence in governmental policies and decisions” (page 557).

The adoption of a stronger gender quota in Bangladesh, therefore, seems to have been an entirely symbolic gesture. And, because of the timing of the quota revision, it seems that this particular change could have been made in a strategic effort to give the citizens the perception of

⁹ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.GN.ZS?locations=ZM>
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.PC.ZS>

democracy and inclusiveness while simultaneously reducing the actual level of democracy in this country. As Riaz (2005) explains: “The year 2004 was not typical for Bangladesh; unfortunately, it was worse than usual. The country’s fragile democracy suffered serious reversals” (page 112). Perhaps the epitome of these reversals can be found, ironically, in the very same constitutional amendment that revised the gender quota. The 14th Amendment to the constitution adjusted the existing gender quota to its highest level ever, but its other provision extended the retirement age for judges from 65 to 67 years old. This may seem like an innocuous change, but it was actually incredibly controversial: by extending the retirement age to 67, the government ensured that the “non-political caretaker government” (NCG) that assumes power during the election so as to ensure fairness would be led by a Chief Justice who was known to be a vocal advocate of the current government, not the opposition (Khan 2015). Thus, while one part of this amendment was clearly detrimental to democracy, the adoption of revised gender quotas was likely the government’s way of signaling a renewed commitment to democracy.

Exceptions: When Feminization is Unacceptable

While I argue that adopting a gender quota is a technique for regaining some of the legitimacy lost by a regime’s shift away from the democratic ideal, it is important to note the exceptions to this theory. If it is indeed the case that citizens believe that a government is more honest, inclusive, and democratic when a gender quota is adopted, and that this belief, in turn, causes governments to strategically adopt quotas to signal an increased adherence to those ideals, then there may be certain circumstances in which a government would avoid adopting a gender quota so as to not be associated with those characteristics. Specifically, I offer two contexts in which, even if a hybrid regime is decreasing its commitment to democracy and thus losing

legitimacy, strategic feminization would do more harm than good to the government: first, when a government is engaged in active conflict, as was the case in the Central African Republic. Second, when a leader or government cultivates legitimacy through hyper-masculinity, as is the case in Russia.

The Central African Republic suffered a dramatic loss in its degree of democratization during the 21st century; both the Freedom House and Polity2 measures of democratization demonstrate a strong downward trajectory during the past two decades. However, even though it could have been beneficial to this regime to adopt a gender quota as a method to, according to my argument, signal a commitment to honesty and democracy even as they remove civil rights, no gender quota was adopted by either the government or any of the political parties. (IN PROGRESS...thank you for your patience!)

While Russia under Yeltsin took some steps toward increased democratization, Putin's leadership put a stop to that trend. Instead, Putin has spent the past two decades chipping away at the democratic elements in Russian institutions, centralizing power in his hands while decreasing the presence of even minimal checks on his government. However, while this steady decline in democratic behavior should, according to my theory, create an incentive to adopt a quota due to the potential legitimacy boost, there are no legislated or voluntary party gender quotas in Russia. There are a multitude of possible reasons for this, including the fact that post-communist regimes are particularly unfriendly to gender quotas due to their association with communism (Ferber and Raabe 2003; Cook and Nechemias 2009), as well as because of the weak presence of women's movements in Russia (Salmenniemi and Adamson 2015). But in addition, if it is the case that the adoption of a gender quota feminizes the government, then any gender quota would undermine the hyper-masculinity that is foundational in Putin's legitimacy and is thus an unacceptable

choice. This is not simply a story of Russia being particularly patriarchal – one of the core assumptions of this book is that all regimes are patriarchal – but rather the fact that the Kremlin *systematically* emphasizes Putin’s hyper-masculine behaviors and heterosexuality in an effort to cultivate legitimacy. Sperling (2015) offers countless examples of the Kremlin’s strategy to make Putin the epitome of masculinity, arguing that:

“Fostering a macho image has been one of the central features of Russian president Vladimir Putin’s political legitimization strategy. Following his first election to the presidency in March 2000, Putin’s numerous masculinity-displaying feats have included his ‘saving’ a crew of journalists from a Siberian tiger, zooming around a track in a Formula-One racecar, braving rough seas to garner a skin sample collected with a crossbow from a gray whale, and showing off his martial arts skills” (page 29).

Thus, in a political context in which the government is systematically reinforcing its own hyper-masculinity in an effort to cultivate legitimacy, the adoption of a gender quota would, according to my theory, be a foolish decision. The Kremlin has built Putin’s legitimacy on hyper-masculine notions of strength and aggression – arguably more than any other regime that exists in the world today – and the adoption of a gender quota would undermine that strategy by feminizing the government. Russia under Putin’s reign, therefore, will never adopt a gender quota, not because the country is particularly patriarchal or misogynist, but because it would undermine their current method of cultivating legitimacy.

Conclusion

While there are many potential reasons why a government or political party may adopt a gender quota, this paper suggested that there is an additional causal factor potentially driving quota adoption: a strategic decision to feminize the party or government. While masculine traits are typically considered the political and societal ideal, I argued that there are certain contexts in

which associating with women could be a successful strategy for cultivating legitimacy. Specifically, I offered case studies in which a regime faced either extreme corruption scandal revelations or a decrease in democratization, and argued that the gender quotas adopted in these environments were a strategic effort to associate the government with women in the eyes of the citizens. In both of these political contexts, the adoption of a gender quota creates the perception that the government will become more feminine – i.e., honest, inclusive, and inherently democratic – and thus the association of the state with these traits is viewed by citizens as a “fix” for either systemic corruption or an increase in authoritarian behaviors.

Works Cited

(in progress- thanks for your patience!)