

Gender Quotas as Strategy: Exploring the Relationship Among International Perceptions of Democracy, Transnational Influence, and Female Representation in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

Do countries that adopt parliamentary gender quotas do so as strategy in response to global pressure to improve the international perception of their democratic progress? Rwanda's 2000 constitution called for a quota, and since then there has been a trend across Sub-Saharan Africa to "fast-track" women's legislative representation. There has been a significant amount of literature on the use of quotas as signaling devices by autocratic regimes to indicate democratic progress. I argue that there is a gap in the scholarship on whether or not strategic gender quotas are efficient tools in achieving the regime's intentions of appearing more democratic by the international community. I explore this relationship through both a case study of Rwanda as an extreme sample case, and descriptive analyses of certain data across countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Freedom House Freedom Scores. Using statistical test methods and comparing sample groups of countries that have and have not adopted quotas, I find evidence to substantiate prevailing theories of signaling. Countries that adopted quotas had higher percentages of women in parliament, ranked higher for female representation, and saw their Freedom Scores improve more over time, compared to the countries that did not have quotas. Further findings are assessed.

Keyword: Gender Quotas, Sub-Saharan Africa, Democratization, International Aid, Comparative Politics, Rwanda, Elections

Introduction

Although many democratizing programs include gender equality as an aim, the countries with the highest female representation in parliament are often not characterized as free. At the same time, countries with the most robust democratic aid programs consistently rank low for female representation. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Rwanda is the country with the highest rate of female representation in its legislative bodies. It has also received a significant amount of democratic aid and attention from the United States. Rwanda's 2000 constitution called for Equality of Results Quotas, and since there has been a rush across the continent to "fast-track" women's legislative representation. Even so, according to the most recent Freedom House Reports, Rwanda earns a score of six, designating it as not free and autocratic. Rwanda continues to receive large amounts of democratic aid. At the same time, many free countries such as the U.S. or Botswana rank extremely low for female representation and do not have gender quotas. Evidently, equal gender representation is not a foolproof measure of democracy, and there has been a significant amount of literature on the use of quotas as a "signaling" device by autocratic regimes to indicate democratic process. The signaling effect is when autocratic or partially democratic regimes pass gender quota legislation in an effort to appeal to transnational influence and improve their reputation, incentivized by democratic aid and assistance (Bush 2011, Edgell 2017, Hughes et al. 2017, 339). I argue that there is a gap in the scholarship on whether or not theories of gender quotas as alternative strategy are efficient tools in achieving the regime's intended goals of appearing more democratic by the international community.

Do countries that adopt gender quotas as strategy in response to global pressure and economic incentives improve international perception of democratic progress? I aim to answer this question through both a case study of Rwanda, as well as descriptive analyses of certain data

across countries including: the percentage of women in parliament, Freedom House Scores, and the presence and nature of gender quotas. I selected Rwanda because of its role as the country with the highest female parliamentary representation. Additionally, they adopted quotas relatively early, in 2000. This allows room for substantial analysis over time. Rwanda can also be thought of as the extreme case because of its unusual gender equality despite its consistently autocratic regime. For these reasons, Rwanda may give insight to the signaling effect.

There may be many factors impacting increased perception of democracy over time, such as conflict, economic agreements, or changes in perceptions of election legitimacy. Given this project's scope and timeframe, I will attempt to establish correlation between quotas and subsequent improvement in Freedom Scores, with recommendations for future research design to establish causation and statistical significance. I will also provide a more in-depth review of the prevailing literature in the field and background on the global pressure and gender equality.

If prevailing theories of signaling are correct, then countries adopt quotas in the interest of appearing more egalitarian and legitimate in the hopes of receiving more aid. As a result, these countries will improve in their international reputation as evidenced by an increase in their Freedom Score. Such quotas may be symbolic in nature, and do little to change women's short-term status and access to government. As will be seen in the case of Rwanda, these quotas may still have long-term impacts that challenge greater sociological norms. Overall, the worldwide trend of gender quotas since the 1990s may mark a significant increase in female political power. I aim to explore the relationship between gender quotas and Freedom Scores; if adopting quotas truly acts as a signaling device, then the presence of legislative gender quotas will have a statistically significant impact on Freedom Scores.

Background and Literature Review

Gender Quotas

Women in government are the subject of many debates and discussions in both academia and public discourse. Even though women make up half of all voters, workers, and the general population, the worldwide average for the number of women in federal legislative bodies is barely above 20% (Hughes et al. 2017, 332). In many countries, there is a paucity of female political candidates in campaigns in addition to several barriers in place to dissuade female involvement in every aspect of the political process, especially in legislative bodies. Even countries that are seen as highly democratic and equitable score low for the number of female lawmakers: the United States for example, hovers around 20% for both houses of the legislative body (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2017).

Some countries have decided to institute gender quotas for their legislative bodies to increase the number of women holding office at the national level. Electoral gender quotas are designed specifically for the purpose of helping women as an underrepresented gender overcome cultural and political obstacles to public office, and often set a specific number or percentage as a threshold, minimum requirement (Hughes et al. 2017, 333). These electoral quotas generally come in three forms: **reserved seats** for women in a parliament; **legislative quotas** in which parties are obliged to nominate a certain percentage of women; and **voluntary party quotas**, when political parties voluntarily agree to nominate a specific number of women (Bush 2011, 105). Legislative quotas, which are sometimes referred to as legal or candidate quotas, do not necessarily guarantee that women will be elected whereas reserved seats ensure women obtain a specific number of seats (Hughes et al. 2017, 333). Voluntary party quotas are self-imposed by political parties and are therefore not legally enforceable. There appears to be a correlation between democracy and what

type of quotas countries adopt. For example, less democratic countries adopt reserved seats and legislative quotas more often than more established democracies (Bush 2011, 109). Many established democracies do not adopt gender quotas at all, while many of the world's most autocratic regimes do.

Scholars generally agree that quotas for women are one of the most significant political advancements in recent times because they 'fast-track' women into government in places where they might not have been able to enter the political arena otherwise (Hughes et al. 2015, 387; Tripp & Kang 2008). In fact, this fast-track approach with electoral quotas has replaced the 'incremental' approach in which the system waits for cultural, political, and socioeconomic developments over time to increase the amount of women in office, especially in developing democracies (Bauer & Burnet 2013, 103). The dramatic increase in scholarship on this topic since the 1990s reflects its growing importance in not only political science, but economic, policy, international affairs, and women's studies as well (Hughes et al. 2017, 333).

Gender quotas have both domestic and international implications, warranting a close study of the circumstances surrounding their adoption. Further, there seems to be an inconsistency in which countries adopt quotas and which are deemed democratic. The global diffusion of quotas has impacted developing democracies the most (Bush 2011, 103). These countries are also often the recipients of international and United States aid and assistance. Since one of the aims of US aid is to promote democracy, and since a major tenet of democracy is civil rights and representation for all, it is worth examining the relationship between quota adoption and democracy.

Regime Types

Categorizing government by regime type can sometimes result in contested definitions. For purposes of this analysis, notions of regime type are posited in political scientist Larry Diamond's

developmental theory of democracy. His seminal work, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, centers democracy as a developmental phenomenon such that all regimes, even new and established democracies “can become even more democratic” (Diamond 1999, 18). According to his work, there is a distinction between electoral democracy, in which regimes have barebones electoral systems and elections, and fully-fledged liberal democracies (Diamond 1999, 10). The latter, which are often referred to as **established democracies**, enjoy certain aspects such as free, fair and contested elections, support for civil society, and protections for civil liberties (Diamond 1999, 11-12). As such, **developing democracies**, which he also refers to as midrange or pseudodemocracies, are characterized as being at some point on this developmental spectrum, sometimes in such a way that “multiparty electoral competition [often] masks...the reality of authoritarian domination” (Diamond, 15). This paper is rooted in this distinction between developing and established democracies, and their further distinction from autocratic and authoritarian regimes that lack electoral systems.

One way to measure where countries are on this supposed democracy spectrum is the Freedom House survey and score reports, which Diamond qualifies as the “best empirical indicator of liberal democracy” (Diamond, 12). The Freedom in the World (2017) report utilized a methodology that assigned countries’ scores in effort to label them as ‘Free’, ‘Partly Free’ and ‘Not Free’, which roughly correlates with Diamond’s theory of developmental democracy. (Freedom in the World 2017: Methodology, 2017).

Transnational Influence

Female representation in government is internationally understood as a signal of democratic progress because it shows that the country is taking legislative steps to provide further equality in their society. Gender quotas can ensure this representation. In effect, they align with global

liberalization efforts to promote democracy, and gender quota policies are often linked with economic development goals (Edgell 2017, 1104). Developing democracies and countries that receive aid are likely to pay attention to global democratic norms. According to world polity theories, international inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have goals that overlap into a ‘script’ that they expect states to follow (Hughes et al. 2015, 357). These organizations work together in what Sarah Bush has coined as the **democracy establishment**, which she defines as the group of professional organizations that create and “implement democracy-assistance programs” (Bush 2015, 10). The democracy establishment has expectations for how they want countries to act: gender equality is one of these expectations. Foreign aid and democracy assistance come in many forms. Aid specifically designated toward women’s representation is aimed at improving their political participation and includes political training for female candidates in order to build “the capacity of female elected officials and civil servants” (Bush 2015, 237). When countries give aid for specific purposes, it follows that they expect the money to be used for that purpose and that they should see improvement in that particular area. Gender quotas help fulfill this expectation of gender equality by dramatically increasing numerical representation of women in elected offices.

There is a significant amount of literature aimed at exploring the relationship between international influence and the adoption of gender quotas. Melanie Hughes, Mona Lena Krook, and Pamela Paxton (2015), confirm that countries feel pressure to conform to international standards of gender equality. The most recent annual review of gender quota literature affirms this consensus that transnational forces influence quota implementation in developing countries (Hughes et al. 2017). IGOs such as the World Bank, the United Nations, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union actively promote the adoption of gender quotas, and many aid programs are

designed specifically for women's empowerment and democratization (Edgell 2017, 1104). As explored in a *Foreign Policy* article, "equitable representation of women in politics and government is an ideal promoted by every development organization and to which every Western government aspires" (Foust & Haring 2012). Consequently, international influence is an important factor in which determines whether a country adopts legislative quotas. It has been proven that countries are receptive to international expectations and respond to economic incentives. They also respond to how other countries perceive their democratizing efforts.

Gender Quota as Strategy

The mere presence of women in government does not correlate with actual political participation or rights (Foust & Haring 2012). So then why do so many developing democracies adopt quotas, and why are they lauded for this superficial progress? Scholars believe it has something to do with perceptions of democracy, foreign aid, and liberal norms. Two such examples are Susan Bush's "International Politics and the Spread of Quotas for Women in Legislatures" (2011) and Amanda Edgell's "Foreign Aid, Democracy, and Gender Quota Laws" (2017). Bush theorizes two causal pathways for quota adoption in developing democracies (2011). One is through direct involvement in the constitutional or legal process, and the second is by indirectly influencing countries with the incentive of more democratic aid (Bush 2011). These countries adopt gender quotas as the result of actual interference from an outside actor, or they voluntarily adopt them as they perceive benefits for the regime. This means that developing democracies respond to pressure and incentives to appear more democratic. Bush argues that these incentives, such as more democratic aid or a better international reputation, are central to the "global diffusion of quotas" (Bush 2011, 104).

The Edgell article explores two casual mechanisms between foreign aid and quotas: one mechanism is that states may adopt quotas as a way to ensure future aid and to signal gender equality, and another mechanism explores whether or not aid aimed at female empowerment is enough to influence the introduction of gender quotas (Edgell 2017). If countries are able to improve their international reputation, such as by improving their IGO and NGO democracy scores, they may receive more aid, engage in more favorable trade deals and economic agreements, or have a higher chance at securing influential allies or sponsors.

Both articles find sufficient evidence for the so-called signaling effect, or the phenomenon of pressure from international norms of gender equality influencing quota adoption. Adoption of quotas may be a purposeful, strategic move by governments. Edgell's research corroborates the theory that countries that are dependent on foreign aid are likely to signal the country's "commitment to international norms" (Edgell 2017, 1105) of democratic standards such as gender equality by adopting legislative quotas (Edgell 2017, 1105). However, these quotas can improve the status of women on paper without actually changing structural power dynamics, and she argues that this policy adoption is strategic in nature (Edgell 2017, 1106). The literature in the field agrees that countries adopt quotas as the result of transnational influence. If countries do in fact adopt quotas as part of a strategy, it should follow that their strategy should be marked successful by some measure. If governments in developing democracies adopt quotas as a strategy to improve their international reputations, we might expect see their reputations improve after quota adoption. This project attempts to illustrate this relationship.

Africa's Developing Democracies and Quotas

The scholarship surrounding legislative gender quotas is particularly fascinated with African countries, especially since the country with the highest percentage of female representation is

Rwanda. Prior to quotas, women in Sub-Saharan Africa were elected via women's wings of political parties, which had the effect of leaving them "marginalized and alienated from the policy formation process" (Paxton & Hughes 2007, 237) and they were often pressured by the parties to reinforce traditional roles and policy choices (Paxton & Hughes 2007, 237). Now, many countries in Africa lead in the number of women in parliament, even though the region is characterized as the world's most politically volatile (Muriaas et al. 2013, 89). Even though numeric representation has increased, there are many questions surrounding their political agency in these cultural contexts. Has their status really improved, or are they subjugated by the system as before?

Fast-tracking and the diffusion of quotas has been so rapid that the number of women legislators in Africa tripled between 1990 and 2010 (Hughes & Tripp 2015, 1513). In recent years, the fast-track trend can especially be seen in countries that are undemocratic or weak states (Burnet 2008; Bauer & Burnet 2013; Hughes & Tripp 2015). Several case studies in the region suggest that these policies may actually undermine democracy or be used by the ruling party to consolidate power or bargain for more democratic aid (Muriaas et al. 2013; Bauer & Burnet 2013). As such, there may be evidence in Africa's post-conflict transitions for the use of quota as strategy. Since African countries have been the target of much of the recent scholarship and are fairly young democracies, I will limit the selection of cases to analyze countries from this region.

Additionally, an in-depth study of Rwanda will show that female representation does not equate to democracy or true female equality. The mere numerical presence of women in government under these fast-track approaches do little to increase women's political and civil rights (Muriaas et al. 2013, 90). In Rwanda specifically, scholars have found that more women in government has not led to more democratization in the short-term but that there may be more opportunities for women in the long-term due to shifting civic society and more incremental

approach changes (Burnet 2008, 361; Bauer & Burnet 2013, 109). These paradoxes give further evidence of the signaling effect because they demonstrate that the governments have little real interest in improving women's statuses beyond giving them seats in parliaments.

Quantitative Analysis: Democracy Scores Over Time

Hypothesis, Variables and Case Selection

I aim to explore the relationship between gender quotas and perceptions of democracy such that countries that adopt legislative gender quotas do so as strategy to improve their international reputations. If prevailing theories of signaling are correct, then countries adopt quotas in the interests of appearing more egalitarian. The countries' international reputations may in fact improve after adoption, as may be demonstrated by better Freedom Scores. In other words, if adopting quotas truly acts as a signaling device, then the independent variable of a legislative gender quota has a statistically significant impact on democracy score, the dependent variable.

For case selection, I compiled a list of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa using the United States Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs' official list. This large case observational analysis includes non-random assignment of the treatment. The Bureau recognizes 47 sovereign countries, 23 of which have adopted gender quotas. Since I situate my discussion in the context of neoliberal foreign aid policies, I use this list because it legitimizes regimes from the US perspective and identifies US foreign aid recipients. Eritrea, one of the countries that adopted a gender quota, did so in 2005, but has yet to actually hold elections, and women have therefore not been elected to any office under a quota (Quota Project). Consequently, the test group, the group of countries that have adopted quotas, is 22. The control group, or countries that have not adopted quotas, is 24.

The control group consists of: Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zambia. The test group, countries that have adopted quotas, are: Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Data and Methods

To collect data on these countries, I referred to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's updated data on the percentages of women in parliaments across 193 countries as of September 2017. This online database ranks the countries in order from most female representation to least in both upper and lower houses of legislature, if applicable. To determine whether or not a country had adopted a gender quota, I referred to The Quota Project. This web site distinguishes between three types of gender quotas used in politics: reserved seats (constitutional and/or legislative); legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative); and political party quotas (voluntary). Similar to Edgell's design method, I only include legally mandated quotas as sufficient, and I exclude countries that only have voluntary party quotas because these are not legally or constitutionally ensured (Edgell 2017, 1107). According to The Quota Project, these are categories one and two quotas. To code, I use a binary variable where the presence of a quota equals 1, and absence of a quota equals 0.

To measure perceptions of democracy, I use Freedom House Score Reports for Political Rights (PR) Scores. This is an ordinal scale of 1 through 7, 1 being most free and 7 least free. In order to make the scale and graphs more intuitive, I relied on Edgell's rescaling approach to make more democratic values at the high end of the range so that 7 to 1 is rescaled as 0 to 6. Although the

Freedom Scores are not an all-encompassing measure of democracy, they are, as seen in Edgell's work, a "crucial measure of perceived level of democracy that policymakers frequently use to evaluate states' compliance with liberal norms" (Edgell 2017, 1109; Freedom House "Our History"). For purposes of measuring perception of democratization, these scores provide an adequate observation of international norms and expectations. An improvement in Freedom Score indicates that the international community agrees that they have seen democratic progress in some aspect. The PR Scores refer to factors of free and fair elections, representation, corruption and opposition (Freedom in the World 2017: Methodology). According to Freedom House methodology, a country's PR score can be assigned by how well minority groups are represented in the government (see Table 1 and Table 2). Since I am particularly interested in the issue of gender representation as it relates to democracy, I used changes in PR Scores to measure perceptions of democracy.

I then compared political rights scores for each country over time. For countries that did adopt gender quotas, I recorded the year of adoption and then found their PR scores for the year prior to adoption ($t-1$), the year of adoption ($t=0$), one year out ($t+1$), and five years out ($t+5$). I did the same for countries that did not adopt quotas, the control group.

Since these countries did not adopt quotas, I used the average year of adoption from the test group as the base year ($t=0$), which was 2007. In cases where data for five years out was unavailable because countries adopted a quota too recently, I used figures from the most recent report in 2017. For cases with multiple instances of quota adoption, or ones that reformed their quota after time, I used the first year they passed the substantial threshold and adopted a category 1 or 2 quota as the base year. This was the case with Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda. Tanzania

adopted a quota in 1995, but did not receive Freedom Scores until 1999 so that is the year I used for t-1. The same was the case with Uganda.

Lastly, I compared the samples using a t-test to determine whether or not the differences in results were statistically significant enough to support a relationship between democracy score and quota adoption, thus supporting evidence for the signaling effect theory.

Country	Inverted 0-6 Scale	Freedom Score: year before adoption (PR)	Freedom Score: year of adoption (PR)	Change in PR -1-0	Freedom Score, +1 years after adoption (PR)	Change in PR 0-1	Freedom Score, +5 years after adoption (PR)	Change in PR 0-5	Freedom Score 2017 (PR)
Sub-saharan Africa									
Benin		5	5		5		5		5
Bostwana		5	5		5		4		4
Cameroon		1	1		1		1		1
Central African Republic		2	2		2		2		0
Chad		1	1		0		0		0
Comoros		3	4		3		4		4
Cote d'Ivoire		1	0		0		1		3
Equatorial Guinea		0	0		0		0		0
Gabon		1	1		1		1		1
Gambia		2	2		2		1		1
Ghana		6	6		6		6		6
Guinea Bissau		4	3		3		3		2
Liberia		3	4		4		4		4
Madagascar		4	3		3		1		4
Malawi		3	3		3		4		4
Mali		5	5		5		5		2
Mauritis		6	6		6		6		6
Mozambique		4	4		4		3		3
Namibia		5	5		5		5		5
Nigeria		3	3		3		3		4
Sao Tome and Principe		5	5		5		5		5
Sierra Leone		3	3		4		4		4
South Africa		6	5		5		5		5
Zambia		3	4		4		4		3
		3.375	3.33333333		3.29166667		3.20833333		3.16666667

Table 1: Control Group Data on the Inverted Scale, 0 Least Free, 6 Most Free

Country	Freedom Score: year before adoption (PR)	Freedom Score: year of adoption (PR)	Change in PR -1-0	Freedom Score, +1 years after adoption (PR)	Change in PR 0-1	Freedom Score, +5 years after adoption (PR)	Change in PR 0-5	Freedom Score 2017 (PR)
Sub-Saharan Africa								
Angola	1	1		1		1		1
Burkina Faso	2	4		2		2		3
Burundi	2	2		4		3		0
Cabo Verde	6	6		6		6		6
Congo (DRC)	1	1		1		1		0
Republic of Congo	2	1		1		1		0
Djibouti	3	3		3		2		1
Guinea	0	0		2		2		2
Kenya	3	3		3		3		3
Lesotho	4	4		4		4		4
Mauritania	1	1		1		1		1
Niger	2			3		4		3
Rwanda	0	0		1		1		1
Senegal	4	4		5		5		5
Somalia	0	0		0		0		0
South Sudan		1		1		0		0
Sudan	0	0		0		0		0
Swaziland	0	0		0		0		0
Tanzania	3			3		3		4
Togo	2	2		3		3		3
Uganda	2			1		2		1
Zimbabwe	1	1		2		2		2
	1.85714286	1.789473684		2.13636364		2.09090909		1.818181818

Table 2: Test Group Data on the Inverted Scale, 0 Least Free, 6 Most Free

Findings and Results

The first finding is that countries with quotas did have more numerical female representation and higher global rankings for women in parliament. In the control group women held an average of 17.4% of the seats in lower houses of legislatures, for an average worldwide ranking at #119. For comparison, the United States is at about 20% and ranks at #101. This means that countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that do not have quotas are on par with the US, and in some cases perform better. The test group had an average of 25.6% seats for women, roughly 8 percentage points higher than the control group, and the average ranking was #76. At this level there is evidence to support that gender quotas lead to higher numerical representation for women.

Secondly, countries that adopted quotas saw their PR scores improve compared to the control group. This relationship is represented in the bar graph below, Figure 1:

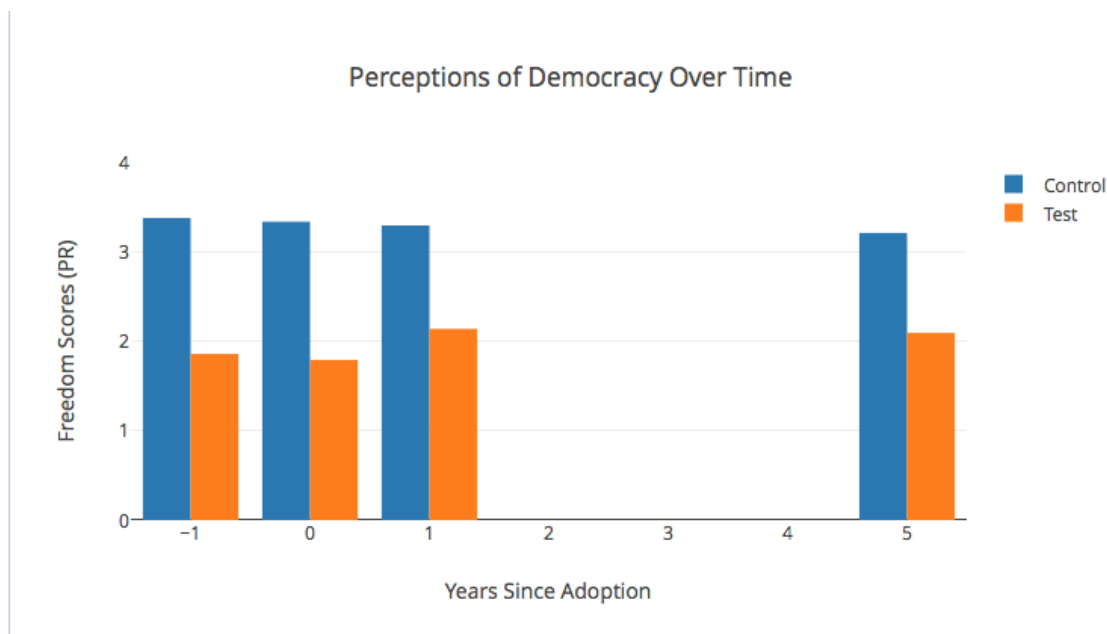


Figure 1: Political rights scores before and after the adoption of quotas, compared to countries that did not adopt quotas. The control group has higher scores in general, but the test group saw their scores improve compared to the countries without quotas.

Looking at averages for the control group on the inverted 0-6 (least free-more free) PR scale, the figures for T-1:T0, T0:T+1, T0:T+5, were: 3.375, 3.333, 3.292, and 3.208. This means that over the span of six years, countries in sub-Saharan Africa that did not have gender quotas, on average, saw their political rights scores become less democratic. On the other hand, for countries that adopted quotas, the figures were 1.857, 1.789, 2.136, and 2.0909. This means that countries with quotas were immediately perceived to be democratizing following the adoption of quotas, and then saw their scores slowly rise some time later. This is best represented in the line graph (Figure 2). Countries without quotas either saw no improvement in their scores or saw their scores worsen. Countries that did not adopt quotas had higher Freedom Scores in general, with the average score a little over a 3, while countries with quotas hovered just below a 2.

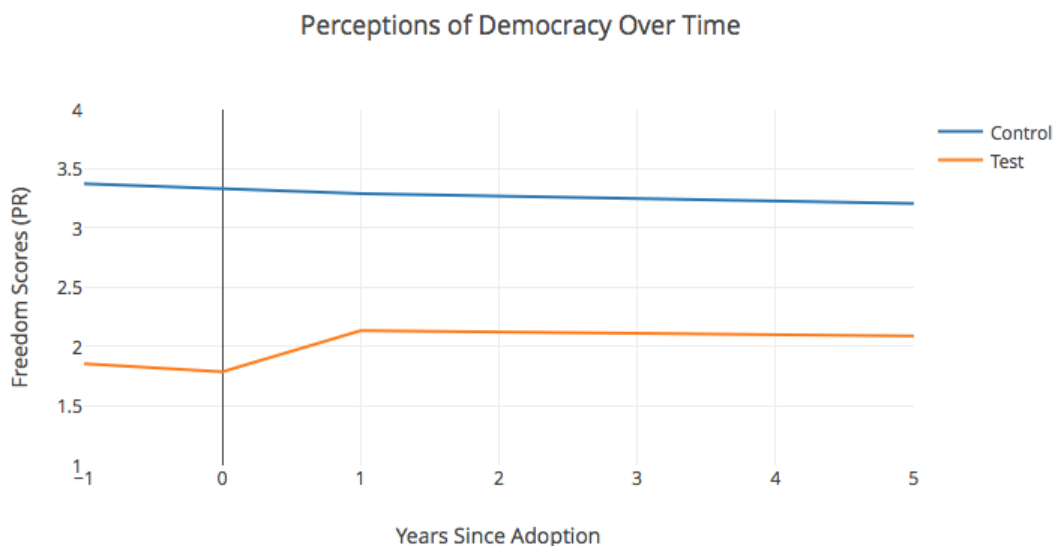


Figure 2: Countries that adopted quotas saw an immediate improvement in Scores (t=0:t+1). Countries without quotas saw their scores slowly decrease over time, but had better scores to begin with.

Lastly, I conducted a t-test, a comparison of average calculation, to see if these changes held any statistical significance. Using a confidence variable of 90% with a degree of freedom of 44, the threshold figure was 1.684. My calculations resulted in a t-test figure of 1.265, which is

below the threshold for statistical significance. This means that quota adoption alone is not substantial enough to explain the differences in PR score with great confidence. Although the results do not confirm the initial hypothesis with certainty, there is a trend in evidence to suggest that the variables are somewhat related.

Based on an interpretation of the graph and numbers, we can see that countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region were overall seen as becoming less democratic in the last two decades. For countries that adopted quotas, that trend seemed to pause or reverse in the time immediately following the adoption of a legislative quota. Further, the countries that had adopted quotas had worse Freedom Scores, which suggests that they were possibly looking to improve their scores more immediately than the control group countries. This would substantiate the signaling effect. Perhaps they wanted a quick way to appear more democratic; the adoption of a quota could have been this mechanism to signal progress without actual societal change.

Changes in democracy score can be explained by a myriad of other possibly contradictory or compounding factors such as the quality of elections, economic freedom, freedom of the press, civil liberties, and other democratic markers. Freedom Scores generally do not vary much from year to year because the methodology includes such complex factors (Freedom House: Methodology). There needs to be substantial change to move a score beyond a category threshold. The fact that the test group experienced some variance immediately following the adoption of a quota indicates that it might have had an impact on the countries' international reputations. Although this initial research is not conclusive, there is some evidence in the data trends to substantiate the signaling effect.

Qualitative Analysis: Case Study of Rwanda

Case Selection and Historical Background

In order to explore the possible practice and impact of the signaling effect, I will examine Rwanda's experience with quotas, their international reception, and the effect of women's mobilization within the country. Rwanda represents an extreme case because it exemplifies an extreme or unusual value of a variable, in this case gender representation, relative to the distribution of Political Rights Freedom Scores. Rwanda, the only country in the world to have a female majority in a legislature, utilizes a constitutional gender quota with both reserved seats and voluntary party quotas (Bauer & Burnet 2013, 103). It also stands out as a post-conflict and newly developing democracy that has had many autocratic setbacks.

Evidence suggests that post-conflict countries recovering from civil war are more likely to draft new constitutions, with room for radical policies, such as gender quotas (Hughes & Tripp 2015, 1517). This is exactly the case with Rwanda. The country suffered a horrendous civil war and genocide in 1994, and although some women were involved as "perpetrators and accomplices," women account for only about 2% of the victims and suspects (Paxton & Hughes 2007, 175). This left a major power vacuum that was filled by the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), which is still the ruling party today. It also left a populous that was disproportionately composed of women. In 2000, with amendments in 2003, the RPA adopted a new constitution that included a 30% gender quota in "all decision-making bodies" (The Quota Project: Rwanda). Although this quota adoption seems independent of transitional influence and perhaps more concerned with domestic matters, there are still aspects of its history that may support the signaling theory.

One central tenet of the signaling theory is that the more dependent a country is on foreign aid, the more likely they are to signal democratic progress with the adoption of a quota (Bush 2011,

104). Rwanda is a major recipient of United States democracy assistance. In 2003, the year they adopted the quota, they received \$46 million in US dollars; the amount received has since steadily increased, reaching an all-time high in 2015 with USAID funds at \$169 million and a total of \$247 million across all US agencies (USAID: Rwanda, 2017). Although aid has increased over time, even adjusting for inflation, Rwanda's Freedom Scores have not improved. Even though Rwanda ranks number one in the world for female representation in parliament, it is stationed in a highly political volatile region and received an overall Freedom Score of a 1 in 2017 on the inverted 0-6 scale. In 2017 they scored only 8 points out of a possible 40 for political rights regarding the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, and the function of the government (Freedom in the World 2017: Rwanda, 2017). Simply put, aid has increased while democracy has not. With the help of the quotas, female representation has increased. Evidence from both Bush (2011) and Edgell (2017) corroborate that this paradoxical relationship and strategic policy choice may be understood as signaling.

Rwanda's International Reputation

Even though they are lauded for growth in women's representation, international perception of democratization in Rwanda has not improved. Since the post-genocide regime transition from 1994-2003, the RPA has become increasingly authoritarian (Bauer & Burnet 2013, 105). They have had increasingly less democratic, and less free and fair elections since its 2003 constitution. In its most recent elections in 2017, the ruling party candidate and sitting President since 1994, Paul Kagame, won re-election with over 98% of the vote, a dismal number by democratic standards (BBC, 2017). Despite its autocratic trends, possibly corrupt elections, and susceptibility to political and civil strife, Rwanda is praised as a beacon for gender equality because of this numerical representation. Just this summer, the BBC reported that President Kagame called the election "just

a formality” (BBC 2017) in the same exact article they called him a “champion for women’s rights” (BBC, 2017). He is simultaneously seen as an increasingly autocratic ruler with little respect for a grounding democratic practice, a free and fair presidential election, and an advocate for women because of the high numeric representation of women in the parliament.

This paradox is not uncommon. In 2008, Jennie Burnet conducted ethnographic research to explore the impact of the gender-balance in Rwanda on policies and women empowerment. She found that:

“Beyond an ideological commitment to promoting women’s rights, the RPF’s pro-woman policies gain a great deal of support for the RPF regime...in the international community...” and that international delegates “overlook the regime’s authoritarianism and human rights abuses... [and] diplomats often respond with an attitude of ‘at least, it’s not genocide’ and then enumerate RPF success, such as promoting women’s rights” (Burnet 2008, 371).

The ideology behind gender quotas helps Rwanda demonstrate its commitment to the democracy establishment, especially because they have backed up this policy with actual increases of women in elected office. This has been met with praise from the international community, and warrants excuses for their non-democratic behavior. The strategy has been so effective that President Kagame hosted an international conference ‘Gender, Nation Building: The Role of Parliaments’ in the capital city of Kigali in 2007, and was awarded the African Gender Award in the same year (Burnet 2008, 369-370). Rwanda is seen as exhibit number one for gender representation. The numbers are so impressive that donors are still willing to give aid despite poor improvements in most other aspects of political rights. The representation is satisfactory enough that IGOs and NGOs turn a blind eye to the regressing political systems and regime behavior. Rwanda has successfully positioned itself through the use of these gender quota policies. The signaling theory suggests that this is a strategic move.

The Effect of the Gender Quota

As a result of increasing authoritarianism, female political participation represents a paradox in the short term: as their participation has increased, women's ability to influence policy making has decreased (Burnet 2008, 361). Women hold more seats but less power over time as the regime resorts back to undemocratic electoral processes. As seen in this case, more women in government does not increase democracy (Bauer & Burnet 2013). This has been seen in many other countries in the region as well. In Africa, particularly, women's presence in government may be "meaningless" because the government structures are so weak (Creevey 2006). Representation does not go far if a democratic structure is unstable in its foundation. Not much can be done to achieve real policy change if the processes are broken. According to Burnet, the quota in Rwanda has not led to "egalitarian notions of citizenship" (Burnet 2008, 363), and may be just a mere symbol meant to impress donors of foreign aid (Burnet 2008, 363). This directly substantiates the signaling theory.

A survey of research suggests that numeric representation does little to actually empower, embolden, and enfranchise women (Muriaas et al. 2013, 90). Women in office does not equate to empowerment on the ground, in a way that the incremental approach may work, for example. Further, quotas in non-democratic countries can be used to "obtain women's votes, to create new patronage networks, or to cultivate national legitimacy on a world stage" (Tripp & Kang 2008, 355, 366). These policies can be used for purposes directly contradictory to their *de jure* intentions. They can even assist the ruling party by providing access to the female voter demographic and by adding seats to the party in a proportional representation legislature (Edgell 2017, 1116). Quotas have the potential strengthen the ruling regime domestically, and improve international perceptions if utilized under the "guise of democratization" (Burnet 2008, 363). This guise is the

exact focus of the signaling theory. They provide an easy way to demonstrate progress because they satiate the democracy establishment's expectation for improved political participation and representation, even if they do not change the regime structure or actually increase democratic practices. Elected officials who are women are tokenized to achieve this end.

All of this is not to say that women are passive in the political process. In fact, in the long term, the increased participation of women due to a quota could prepare the path for their meaningful participation in a genuine democracy. Consider that women who hold office in developing countries due to quotas perform on par with their male peers (Franceschet et al. 2012). Once in office, women do have some agency in the legislative process. There is evidence to show that quotas have significantly and positively impacted women's participation (Tripp & Kang, 2008). Even if quotas are not able to reach their full potential, the aid and reputation associated with them can be beneficial to domestic civil society.

In Rwanda, women have seen significant impact from aid targeted at women's empowerment and organization, and this aid and assistance on the ground has emboldened women's civil society organizations (Burnet 2008, 374). The notion that increased civil society activity increases the likelihood of democratization is generally agreed upon. Burnet critiques Rwanda's approach to civil society and finds many flaws in the relationship between the women in government and women in the organizations, but she also agrees that more women in government has shifted cultural perceptions of what women are capable of (Burnet 2008, 382). In effect, this has "opened the doors to greater individual freedom for women in other aspects of their lives" and increased the "numbers of women with leadership and government experience" (Burnet 2008, 382, 385). These shifts, though incremental, have the potential to impact societal change at the local level. Women in office may inspire younger women to run or become politically involved.

Women returning home to their communities from the federal political scene bring back their skills that in turn can bolster civil society and local government. Empowerment of women is always a good idea. Even if patriarchal norms and autocratic regimes attempt to further their own agendas at the expense of elected women, female politicians are not docile nor sedentary. As seen in Rwanda, gender quotas may arise for a myriad of compounding factors, and their implications are vast.

Conclusion

As seen in both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, there is a relationship between international perceptions of democracy and gender quotas in developing democracies. Gender equality and representation are aims of democratizing efforts, and some countries fast-track women's representation through quotas in response to these international pressures. They are also incentivized by democracy aid and assistance, and the potential to improve their reputations, which is reinforced by the democracy establishment. This phenomenon is particularly true in post-conflict countries and developing democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Firstly, further research should incorporate more intersectionality theories. Gender and ethnicity intersect continuously, and according to Lori Handrahan's research, scholarship on democratization often ignores compounding aspects of identity such as race. Her research aims to prove that a factor of democracy assistance failure has been the "marginalization of gender that has obscured the significance of ethnicity" (Handrahan 2002, 7). In other words, we cannot have stable democracies without the inclusion of women and the recognition of ethnicity. Perhaps the adverse effect of gender quota as strategy by regimes can be explained by US failure to incorporate women of color. I recommend that scholars researching quota policies in Africa consider these

theories and incorporate critiques from a critical race theory lens in order to approachably understand the impact of gender polices.

The initial trends in my observations of Freedom House Scores over time lend evidence to the signaling effect theory. If countries adopt quotas as a strategic move, then they should expect to see some return in the form of aid or better democracy. The data confirms that there may be a correlation between quota adoption and subsequent improvements in the international community's perception of democracy in that country. One aspect that is hard to untangle is whether or not these countries are actually becoming more democratic, or if it is only the perception of democracy that is changing. As such, additional measures of democracy would improve the data. It would also be valuable to mark changes in scores every year, and to measure if there were any changes in democratic aid. The research design would benefit from greater attention to compounding and omitted variables to alleviate endogeneity problems.

In terms of the case study, the analysis of Rwanda's interaction with gender quotas lends insight to the overall question of how gender quotas impact perceptions of democracies. Women's numerical representation improved, while other markers of democracy regressed and Freedom Scores only slightly improved. At the same time, Rwanda has been continually lauded as a champion for women, even though women on the ground may not see a short-term improvement in their status. In the long-term, fast-tracked gender quotas may help change societal contexts over time, and empower women and communities. Further research on the impact of quotas, both domestically and geopolitically, would help actors in developing democracies, the democracy establishment, and women's movements, disentangle the intent, purpose, and effect of these policies.

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