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GENDER QUOTAS, REPRESENTATION, AND COMPARATIVE DEMOCRACY: AN INTRODUCTION

By Benjamin Smith and Juliana Restrepo Sanín



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The rise of populism and white nationalism worldwide poses significant challenges to democratic rule in established democracies and democratizing countries alike. A central part of the subsequent democratic backsliding has revolved around attempted and successful reversals in the protection of women's and other minoritized groups' rights. Although political scientists are paying more attention to these issues, scholarship on gender, women, and politics, is long established, even if sometimes relegated to the outskirts of our discipline as niche or narrow.

In this issue of the CP newsletter, we bring emerging and established scholars to reflect on the contributions of gender and politics scholarship to the study of comparative politics. In particular, we asked them to reflect on how the adoption of gender quotas worldwide and the scholarship emerging from it has contributed to the study of comparative politics beyond quotas.

Gender quotas are the most common type of electoral reform worldwide. Beginning as voluntary (and often ignored) party commitments to the inclusion of women and sometimes other marginalized groups, gender quotas have now been adopted in over 130 countries and have transformed the face of politics by increasing the presence of women in national and subnational elected bodies, in some countries even reaching parity. Beyond the impact on the descriptive representation of women, however, gender quotas have more profound effects on politics. The essays in this issue, written by scholars using different methodologies, theoretical framings, and focusing on different regions of the world, show that gender quotas have transformed electoral systems, candidate selection mechanisms, political mobilization and activism, and more. In addition, in this issue Amanda Edgell

reviews the award-winning QAROT dataset on gender quotas around the world.

These contributions, together with the prolific gender and politics scholarship analyzing these dynamics, has shown that thinking seriously about gender quotas and women's political representation has also changed how political scientists think about representation, political violence, polarization, democracy, and authoritarian resilience. This issue is thus an invitation to all comparativists to seriously engage with gender and comparative politics scholarship and an illustration of how, and how deeply, it matters for the quality and durability of democracy.

As we look forward to 2023, we invite section members to reach out to us with proposals for symposia, for dataset and book reviews, and for young scholars (especially those not at the small core of historically top-ranked universities) to contact us about the prospect of contributing short summary essays introducing their scholarship. Finally, as we approach year's end, we wish you restorative winter breaks, intellectual downtime, and the very best in the year to come.

DATASET REVIEW SUBMISSIONS

If you have submissions for the dataset review section of the APSA-CP Newsletter, please email bbsmith@ufl.edu.



GENDER QUOTAS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

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Electoral gender quotas have diffused rapidly around the world over the last 25 years. Introduced for a variety of reasons, these measures mandate a minimum proportion of women among political candidates and elected officials, via national reforms or changes to individual party statutes (Krook 2009). Collectively, quotas have contributed to a sharp rise in the share of women in national parliaments, with the global average growing from 12 percent in January 1997¹ to 26.4 percent by October 2022.² These developments inspired a “first generation” of research on the adoption and implementation of these policies. Over the last ten years, they have also motivated a vibrant “second generation” of work on the impact of quotas beyond numbers, exploring their effects on the diversity and qualifications of political representatives, patterns in legislative behavior on gendered and non-gendered issues, and attitudes and norms regarding women’s political engagement (Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012).

As quotas have entered the political science mainstream, feminist practitioners and scholars have increasingly turned their attention to a second global trend: violence against women in politics. This concept refers to abuse, intimidation, and harassment faced by women seeking to participate in politics, with the aim of deterring them from being political active (Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2020). Coined by political women around the world, although sometimes using different terms, violence against women in politics seeks to expose a dimension of political violence that has, until now, largely been overlooked. Lack of awareness of this problem stems from the widespread normalization of violence against politicians, exacerbated—in the case of women—by the deep roots of sexism and misogyny, rendering hostility against women in public

life at once both unremarkable and invisible.

On their own, each of these topics merits closer attention from political scientists. The use of quotas in more than 140 countries means that, for comparative politics scholars in particular, it is no longer possible to ignore gender as a factor in elections, candidate selection, or political representation, among other research questions. Growing recognition of violence against women in politics, while more recent in nature, challenges received definitions of political and electoral violence. Yet the intersection between quotas and violence is also worth investigating for gender and non-gender scholars alike. In addition to providing deeper insights into the gendered dynamics of politics, understanding how quotas connect to growing violence against female politicians sheds light on core issues in the study of global politics, such as the causes and effects of political polarization and democratic backsliding.

Why do these topics matter?

The comparative study of gender quotas is one of the largest areas of research on gender and politics. Over the last 20 years, this work has provided a wide range of empirical and theoretical insights relevant to political science as a whole. Studies of quota adoption have mapped and sought to explain the rapid and widespread diffusion of these measures around the globe. In so doing, they have provided insights into the determinants of electoral reform (Celis, Meier, and Krook 2011), including the central role of women’s movements in pressuring states to institute quota policies (Kang and Tripp 2018). They have troubled associations between women’s representation and democracy, noting how authoritarian regimes may see quotas as a way to appear more democratic (Bjarnegård and Zetter-

berg 2022). And they have presented new ways of thinking about norm diffusion, expanding on the motivations for (Bush 2011; Towns 2010), and dynamics in (Krook and True 2012), aligning with global norms.

Research on quota implementation has attempted to understand why some quota policies are more effective than others in electing women. These studies have advanced the literature on electoral systems, revealing how features of ballot design (Jones 2009) and formulas of seat allocation (Belschner 2022) affect how quotas are translated into practice. By zeroing in on quotas, they have opened up the “secret garden” of candidate selection, uncovering how informal rules work to exclude and marginalize women (Bjarnegård and Kenny 2015; Gatto and Wylie 2022). In so doing, they have contributed to the development of feminist institutionalism, highlighting the gendered nature of political institutions and how these create opportunities and limits to institutional change (Kenny 2013; Krook 2009).

The literature on quota impact, finally, has sought to theorize and measure what quotas mean beyond their effects on the numbers of women elected. These scholars have used the case of gender quotas to open up new conversations about political qualifications, problematizing claims that quotas undermine “merit” among politicians (Murray 2014). They have developed new ways of conceptualizing the policy-making process, as a result of examining whether or not quotas lead to the proposal and passage of laws beneficial to women (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). And they have identified new mechanisms for changing deeply-held social norms, exploring how exposure to women leaders can instigate greater acceptance of gender equality in society (Beaman et al 2009; Burnett 2011).

Studies on violence against women in politics are far fewer, but the number of scholars working in this area has expanded notably in recent years.³ Early work was largely conceptual, seeking to figure out what this phenomenon “was” and how it might be defined (Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo 2020; Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2020). Later studies have sought to determine its prevalence

(Bjarnegård, Håkansson, and Zetterberg 2022) and its impact on democracy (Restrepo Sanín 2022). As a group, these scholars question prevailing understandings of political violence in several key ways. First, they illustrate that violence is not merely physical; it may also be psychological, sexual, economic, and semiotic (Krook and Restrepo Sanín 2020). Second, they show that political violence is not merely motivated by political differences; it may also stem from efforts to communicate which groups can and cannot participate in politics (Krook 2020b). Third, they point to new locations of political violence, highlighting social media as a common space for political harassment and abuse (Erikson, Håkansson, and Josefsson 2021).

Because quotas aim to bring more women into politics, and violence against women in politics seeks to keep them out, observers often assume they are interconnected phenomena. However, the causal relationship, if any, remains unclear.

What is their relationship?

Because quotas aim to bring more women into politics, and violence against women in politics seeks to keep them out, observers often assume they are interconnected phenomena. However, the causal relationship, if any, remains unclear. There are at least three possibilities. The introduction of quotas may induce a backlash against women nominated and elected through these measures (the quota mechanism). Alternatively, quotas may increase the number of women in politics, increasing the overall rate of violence because there are more women active in public life (the numbers mechanism). Finally, quotas may bring into focus longstanding opposition to women’s presence in politics, which has existed historically and is a problem today even in non-quota countries (the presence mechanism).

Experts on Latin American politics were among the first to engage in academic theorizing on violence against women in politics. Nearly all countries in the region have adopted legislative quotas, requiring that all parties nominate between 30 percent and 50 percent female candidates (Archenti and Tula 2014). During this same time period, debates on political harassment and violence against women emerged, first in Bolivia and then spreading to other countries across the region (Albaine 2016; Restrepo Sanín 2022). In this context, scholars framed violence as a form of backlash against quota provisions. Violence committed by members of a woman’s own party typically aims to pressure women elected via quotas to stand down in favor of male alternates, decreasing the share of women in political bodies. Other forms of harassment, including false allegations of corruption and denial of salaries to elected women, seek to render women less effective as representatives (Albaine 2016; Cerna Cerna 2014).

The numbers argument is related, but distinct, to the quota mechanism. While not all quotas are equally successful in increasing the share of women in political office, they can lead to dramatic changes in the proportion of women contesting elections and participating in political debates. Moreover, quotas can have a mobilizing effect, leading more women to become interested in politics as well as in pursuing a political career (Geissel and Hust 2005; O’Brien and Rickne 2016). As more women enter politics, each woman increases her likelihood of being exposed to violence, making it a more common and—as a greater share of women feel inclined to speak out—a more visible phenomenon (Krook 2020b). Public awareness is also likely to grow as women accede to higher positions of leadership, subjecting them to higher levels of violence due their greater prominence in political life (Håkansson 2021).

A third possibility is that quotas simply reveal long-established resistance to women’s political participation. Women suffragists, for example, experienced various forms of violence in response to their work to secure women’s political rights. In 1910, women marching to the House of Commons in London were brutally assaulted by police,

leading to numerous physical injuries (Morrell 1981). An inquiry highlighted the specifically sexual nature of many of these acts (Murray and Brailsford 1911). A suffrage parade in Washington, DC, in 1913 was similarly disrupted, with male spectators attacking the marchers, injuring more than 300 people (Lumsden 2000). Violence against women in politics is also not restricted to quota countries. The United States offers copious examples, from the physical assault at the Pelosi residence and kidnapping plot against Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer (Krook 2020a) to threatening phone calls and online harassment of women at all levels of American government (Herrick et al 2021; Rheault, Rayment, and Musulan 2019).

How does a dual focus advance political science?

Considered separately, studies on gender quotas and violence against women in politics add important insights into political dynamics around the world. Examining their relationship, however, also contributes to central literatures in political science. One area is research on political polarization. In many countries, politics has long been a conflictual space, but evidence suggests growing resentment, nastiness, and incivility across ideological divides (Shea and Sproveri 2012). These developments have intersected with structural changes in the political media industry, promoting ideological selectivity, vilification of opponents, and fear mongering (Berry and Sobieraj 2014). Platforms like Twitter have exacerbated these trends, with short and streamlined messages fostering a “public discourse that is simple, impetuous, and frequently denigrating and dehumanizing” (Ott 2017, 60).

Viewed through the lens of violence against women in politics, it becomes clear that political polarization not only affects the terms of political debate. Polarization can also drive political exclusion, providing a motivation as well as a platform for vitriolic attacks against members of marginalized groups, above and beyond ‘regular’ forms of resistance to their political participation. Such dynamics undermine the goals of quotas through growing levels of violence, as seen in countries with parity laws like Bolivia. In

Sweden, where political parties have implemented quotas for decades, polarization fueled by misogyny and white nationalism has led prominent immigrant-background women to leave politics, despite strong commitments to diversity in party policies. In non-quota countries like the US, these dynamics explain why partisan hostilities often target women powerful women like Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi, as well as visible women of color like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar.

A second literature where examining the intersection of quotas and violence can help advance theorizing is work on democratic backsliding. While authoritarian rulers often showcase masculinity in highly exaggerated ways (Kaul 2021), a closer look reveals how central ideas of gender are to their attacks on democracy. In Brazil, efforts to erode democratic institutions have taken a dual track: removing the democratically elected female president from power, while reversing a generation of policy gains and state structures advancing gender equality (Biroli 2018). As the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan, female members of parliament – elected via quotas first adopted in 2004 – left the country or went into hiding. At the same time, protections for women’s rights, already somewhat tenuous, evaporated entirely. These examples show that elected women and women’s rights, while not a guarantee of democracy, are often among the first elements to be erased as democratic institutions break down. Attending to the fate of quotas, as well as dynamics of violence against women in politics, thus magnifies what we recognize as being lost when democracy disappears.

Notes

¹ <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/world010197.htm>

² <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=10&year=2022>

³ <https://www.vawpolitics.org/research>

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GENDER QUOTAS AND AUTHORITARIAN RULE IN AFRICA GAINS OR SETBACKS FOR WOMEN?

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Historically, democracy has been associated with increases in women's political leadership. Today, in Africa, however, the majority of countries that have increased women's political representation are authoritarian and they have done so at the same rates as democratic countries in Africa, in the executive and at the national and subnational levels in legislative bodies. Quotas remain the main mechanism countries have used to increase legislative representation (Stockemer 2009). As a result, African parliaments have quadrupled the levels of representation of women from 1990 to 2021.

With political liberalization in Africa after the 1990s, new independent women's movements emerged to demand an expansion of women's rights and women's leadership, giving added impetus to the adoption of quotas. Women politicians themselves took advantage of these openings—like the introduction of quotas—to advance their own goals.

Where women's coalitions in Africa mobilized for quotas, they were more likely to be adopted (Kang and Tripp 2018). At the same time, authoritarian regimes have engaged in political learning and adopted a host of new strategies to further entrench their rule. Instrumentalizing women's rights through the use of quotas was one of them (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2022). This, however, poses a conundrum, which is explored in this paper: as women's movements demand and gain increased political representation, the greater the danger that women's inclusion is used to prop up authoritarian regimes.

Patterns in Quota Adoption

Authoritarian countries started adopting quotas

in large numbers in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War. My research shows that they did so in order to maintain vote share as countries moved from being single-party to multiparty states. Large numbers of countries in Africa also came out of major civil war in this same period and needed to recast their international image to bring them more in line with changing international gender norms (Hughes and Tripp 2015, Tripp 2015). These three factors—the shift to multipartyism, the end of civil war, and changing international norms—interacted with one another, creating ripple effects detailed below.

First, the shift to multipartyism was part of a broader trend of political liberalization, which gave rise to autonomous women's organizations and movements independent of the ruling party. These trends also created opportunities for authoritarian regimes to engage in political learning. They adopted a host of new strategies to further entrench their rule: the use of quotas was one of them. The strategies were aimed at legitimizing and entrenching their own rule and suppressing the opposition. An entrenched dominant party was one that had remained in power through at least three electoral cycles, to borrow Sartori's definition. Thus, one characteristic of an entrenched party was that it was successful in promoting higher levels of women as representatives in parliament. This was true in both authoritarian and democratic countries.

The need to maintain vote share made reserved seats more attractive to leaders of authoritarian countries. In fact, the only countries that have reserved seats in Africa are authoritarian countries. Globally, only two democratic countries have adopted reserved seats. This is because it is

easier to control those seats and ensure loyalty with the ruling party and suppress the opposition than with a legislative candidate quota system or party quotas.

Prior to 1995, only six countries in Africa had adopted some kind of legislative quota, while today 67 percent (36) of African countries have a legally mandated quota. By comparison, globally only 43 percent of countries have legal gender quotas if one excludes Africa. In Africa, 67 percent of authoritarian countries and 59 percent of hybrid regimes had adopted a gender quota for women in legislatures, while only 44 percent of democratic countries had done so in 2021. At least 21 countries in Africa have legislated quotas and 15 have reserved seats, which means that 36 countries in Africa have a legally mandated quota. In addition, 36 African countries have parties with some kind of quota (Freedom House 2022, IDEA 2022).

Second, the end of the Cold War resulted in the end of many long-standing conflicts, which created opportunity structures (e.g., the establishment of peace accords, constitutional reforms, and electoral reforms) that allowed for increased women's representation in post-conflict settings. These settings were mostly authoritarian.

And finally, changing international norms regarding women's representation after the 1990s fostered a new kind of virtue signaling around women's leadership globally and in Africa, particularly after the 1995 United Nations Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, which adopted a Platform of Action requiring member states to take steps to increase women's leadership in all areas and at all levels (Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015). Most authoritarian countries had more to gain than democracies in seeking to clean up their tarred image as a result of human rights abuses. The adoption of women as leaders appeared to be one of the easiest ways to signal a change in policy.

The more immediate reasons authoritarian countries have adopted quotas are varied, including both economic and political reasons targeting both international and domestic audiences. And while on the one hand, quotas represent genuine gains for women, they also serve other purposes unrelated to

women's interests or women's advancement. For example, they can be used to appeal to trade partners in the interests of expanding trade and foreign direct investment, as Morocco has done in its relations with its main trade partners in the European Union. For others, the interest in boosting foreign aid, including military aid, looms large, as is the case of Egypt, which was the largest recipient of United States security aid in Africa until September 2022, when this aid was blocked due to human rights violations. Domestically, countries may also want to improve women's status in order to increase women's labor productivity to serve key industrial or agricultural sectors and to diversify the economy.

The discrepancy between the levels of legislative representation of women in the opposition parties relative to opposition male parliamentarians is quite significant. It underscores an important feature of authoritarianism in Africa today, namely that the political beneficiaries of these processes are almost exclusively women aligned with the ruling party.

Political strategies are equally important. Globally, countries may have used quotas to increase women's representation in order to soften a country's image after civil war, genocide, or military rule or as a result of jihadist activity. They may seek legitimacy to offset a problematic human rights record; or virtue signal by showcasing women leaders to assert global or regional leadership (e.g., Rwanda). They may also wish to simply comply with international and regional targets for women's representation so as not to stand out as laggards. Domestically, authoritarian regimes may instrumentalize women leaders in order to preserve or expand vote share of the ruling party. They may seek to expand ruling coalitions, especially with key ethnic and religious groups, or they may use women's rights as a way of isolating extremist jihadist or Salafi elements. And finally, they may pursue strategies to increase votes from women.

Conundrum for Women's Movements

For women's movements, the bid for inclusion in leadership poses numerous dilemmas. Take, for example, Egypt's President Sisi efforts to rewrite Egypt's constitution so that it expanded women's rights to political representation alongside other key provisions around gender equality. Five women representing various women's organizations were brought on to the Constitutional Committee that drafted the constitution. However, in the end feminists were divided over whether or not to support the constitution in the 2014 constitutional referendum because even though the constitution included women's rights provisions, it also allowed for military trials for civilians and allowed economic privileges for the military, which contravened human rights. The majority of feminists ended up voting in favor of the constitution—a Faustian bargain—the consequences of which have been disastrous for women's rights, women's mobilization and human rights more generally (Kamal 2015). Since the passage of the constitution, President Sisi's government has become extraordinarily repressive of civil society including women's rights activists (Allam 2018).

Part of what makes these strategies work is that international donors and institutions like UN agencies rank countries (see, for example, the rankings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Report) and track their progress. In Africa, it is not only international agencies that seek compliance from member states, regional organizations like the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, have also put pressure on governments to increase the representation of women.

Rwanda's support for women's leadership is similarly problematic. Rwanda has the highest rate of women in parliament (61 percent) in the world. Rwandese president Paul Kagame has made international speeches to the Women in Parliaments Global Forum, signaling that he has his eye on the international indices as he works to advance women in politics.¹ For example, in one speech at the Forum, he signaled to the international community his commitment to women's leadership was a means to further development because women "are both the benefi-

ciaries and the principal agents of development.” He said Rwanda was using women “to catalyse investments to raise labour productivity, so that growth results in higher incomes for everyone in society [...], with women playing lead roles at different levels in all sectors.”

Yet at the same time, women aspiring to the presidency have been viciously attacked. One businesswoman, Diane Rwigara, who had been outspoken against the Kagame regime stood as an independent candidate in the 2017 Rwandan presidential elections. Soon after she announced her candidacy, nude photos of her were circulated to the press in an effort to intimidate her. Then, the Electoral Commission disqualified her candidacy on technical grounds. Rwigara, her mother, and four other associates were arrested and charged with “inciting insurrection.” She was later acquitted in 2018, possibly as a result of international pressure, but her arrest had a chilling effect on other women presidential aspirants and those in the political opposition. This was not an isolated case. Other women opposition leaders have faced similar smear campaigns and imprisonments.

Uganda promoted women parliamentary leaders as one part of a strategy to maintain vote share after adopting multipartyism in 2005. It increased the number of women in reserved seats by expanding the number of districts, increased the appointments of women in parliament, and actively de-campaigned opposition women leaders. The government thus used a variety of strategies to advance women political leaders, simultaneously responding to pressures from the women’s movement, while seeking to ensure its continued dominance. Opposition women turned out to be the biggest losers in this process, particularly in running for reserved seats. The discrepancy between the levels of legislative representation of women in the opposition parties relative to opposition male parliamentarians is quite significant. It underscores an important feature of authoritarianism in Africa today, namely that the political beneficiaries of these processes are almost exclusively women aligned with the ruling party.

While women activists themselves initially widely supported Ugandan President Muse-

veni and the ruling party, it gradually became clear to many activists that Museveni was using their votes and leadership to ensure that he remained in power indefinitely. As former NRM parliamentarian, minister, and member of the Constitutional Commission Miria Matembe explained in an interview with the author: “He [Museveni] wanted to mobilize, secure the support of women. Museveni intended to offer women an opportunity to get into political structures, and it [his policy] was supposed to motivate them and bring them on board so that their views could be heard, that they would be able to influence the governance agenda. As I talk now, the affirmative action, as you know, it is a double-edged sword. It can be used by those in power [...] to sustain them in power.”

Conclusion

A less violent and ideological form of competitive authoritarianism has been spreading worldwide that often mimics democracy through the use of institutions like elections. In Africa, this form of authoritarianism emerged after 1990 as autocratic countries liberalized politically. These electoral autocracies may be free of massive fraud, but incumbents skew the outcome through a host of other tactics, including abuse of state resources, denying the opposition media coverage, harassing opposition candidates, and even jailing, exiling, or murdering them (Levitsky and Way 2002). Part of this sprucing up of the authoritarian image has also involved using women’s rights and women leaders to divert attention away from the less savory and more repressive sides of their rule. They have used reserved seats, legislated candidate quotas, and the appointment of women to parliament as part of their efforts to maintain dominance.

This poses particular challenges for women’s movements, which on the one hand, have been demanding an increase in representation for women in parliaments and other bodies. However, the way in which incumbents have implemented the quotas, especially through reserved seats, have skewed the process against the opposition in ways that make it very difficult for the opposition to ever win. Policies in which women’s rights are instrumental to other purposes may mark symbolic advances, but they may also run the risk of not directly addressing women’s rights

concerns, of having problematic unintended consequences, and of not being crafted with the interests of women themselves in mind. When they divert attention from human rights violations, they undermine women’s rights, which depend on other rights like the freedom of association, freedom of speech, free and fair elections, and the right to freely participate in politics. When policies are enacted for purposes of expediency and pleasing an external audience, they may look good on paper, but they may not be implemented or funded at a level that would bring about real changes for women. And finally, those women’s rights activists who are associated with these reforms, however sincere they are in their goals, may find themselves tainted by their association with a corrupt and dictatorial government, especially once the country democratizes (Tripp 2019).

Notes

¹ See for example, <https://www.paulkagame.com/keynote-address-by-president-paul-kagame-at-the-women-in-parliaments-global-forum-joint-session-with-mdg-advocacy-group/>

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BEYOND NUMBERS DEEPENING GENDER QUOTAS SCHOLARSHIP ON ASIA

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The scholarship on gender quotas¹ in Asia flourished over the last two decades. Following the Third Wave of democratization and electoral reforms, the study of gender quotas was spurred by South Korea's adoption of legislated candidate quotas in 2000, followed by Pakistan's and Bangladesh's introduction of reserved seats for women in 2002 and 2004. Quotas have helped raise women's descriptive representation in national parliaments across Asia. Future work needs to go beyond numbers to consider how local politics, ethnic quotas, religion, and other informal mechanisms interact to force an egalitarian political culture to promote and value women's political participation. Deepening gender quotas scholarship on Asia would require more innovative, comparative work on the substantive representation of quota and non-quota women leaders in all levels of government.

Over the last decades, 11 out of 25 countries have reserved seats,² candidate quotas or some form of parity laws to improve women's legislative representation in Asia.³ Specifically, five (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Pakistan and Taiwan) have seats reserved for women in the parliament, while six (Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, South Korea, Timor-Leste and Vietnam) set targets for all parties to nominate a proportion of women candidates for legislative elections. Additionally, major parties in eight countries (Philippines, South Korea, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore) are known to have voluntary party quotas or set targets to ensure gender parity in the party list or in key party committees (see Table 1).

Intra-regional Variation

Table 1 shows countries that adopted gender quotas have done better than those that did not.

The 11 countries that applied quotas at the legislative level have an average of 26 percent women in lower chambers, which is higher than the total average of 13 countries that did not apply quotas, with an average of 15 percent of women. Yet, the numerical achievements are uneven across the region. For example, quotas countries such as South Korea and Taiwan have similar economic development level and history of democratization, but they have vastly different outcomes: South Korea has attained 17 percent of women legislators while Taiwan has reached 42 percent in the 2020 national elections, the highest in Asia. The act of mandating quotas in Mongolia, South Korea, and Indonesia without including placement mechanisms or enforcing sanctions, has failed to make significant change in women's parliamentary representation, averaging less than 20 percent of total seats for each.

Explanations for the intra-regional variation comes from differences in electoral and party systems. In terms of electoral systems, the more proportional ones appear to work better with quotas policies, favoring the election of women candidates. In Taiwan, the changes in electoral system from single non-transferable vote (SNTV) to mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) alter the parameters of party competition and nomination rules, which have significant effects on the selection of quotas women and their legislative representation (Yang and Gelb 2019). Other explanations examine how other mechanisms—including open versus closed-list PR system, ranking of candidates on the ballot, size of district magnitude, legal enforcement, and other quotas mechanisms—could interact with gender quotas to affect women's electoral success. For example, in Indonesia, a candidate's position on the party list is now known to be more important than the

Table 1: Quotas, Regime Types and Women's Political Representation in Asia							
	GENDER QUOTA					ETHNIC QUOTA	
Country	Quota Type (LH)	Sub-Regional	Party Quota	Last Election	Women (LH) %	Quota Type	Targetted Groups
Timor-Leste	Candidate Quotas	Reserved seats	No	2018	34%	No	No
Nepal	Candidate Quotas	Candidate Quotas	No	2017	33%	Candidate Quota	Dalit, Adivasi, Janajati, Khas Arya, Madhesi, Tharu and Muslim
Indonesia	Candidate Quotas	Candidate Quotas	No	2019	17%	No	No
South Korea	Candidate Quotas	Candidate Quotas	Yes	2020	19%	No	No
Mongolia	Candidate Quotas	Candidate Quotas	No	2020	17%	No	No
Taiwan	Reserved seats	Reserved Seats	No	2020	43%	Reserved Seats	Indigenous Groups
Afghanistan	Reserved seats	Reserved	No	2018	24%	No	No
China	Reserved seats	NA	Yes	2018	25%	Appointment	Minority Nationalities
Pakistan	Reserved seats	Reserved Seats	No	2018	20%	Non-Muslim	Religious minorities
Bangladesh	Reserved seats	Reserved	No	2018	21%	No	No
Vietnam	Target System	Target system	Yes	2021	30%	Candidate Quota	Ethnic minorities
Philippines	No	Reserved Seats	Yes	2022	27%	Reserved Seats	Labour, peasant, urban poor, Indigenous peoples and women
Laos	No	No	No	2021	22%	No	No
Singapore	No	No	Yes	2020	29%	Candidate Quota Malay,	No
North Korea	No	No	No	2019	17%	No	No
Bhutan	No	No	No	2018	15%	No	No
Cambodia	No	No	No	2018	15%	No	No
Malaysia	No	No	No	2018	14%	No	No
India	No	Reserved seats	No	2019	14%	Reserved seats	Scheduled Castes and Tribes
Myanmar	No	No	No	2015	11%	No	No
Japan	No	No	Yes	2021	9%	No	No
Brunei	No	No	No	2017	9%	No	No
Maldives	No	No	No	2019	4%	No	No
Sri Lanka	No	No	No	2020	5%	No	No
Thailand	No	No	Yes	2019	16%	No	No

Source: Compiled by author. LH = Lower House

gender quotas itself (Bylesjö and Seda 2006; Prihatini 2019). In South Korea, studies found that party resistance and lack of compliance to quota policies affect women's electability and descriptive representation (H. Lee and Shin 2016) and that candidate selection in clientelistic parties limit the effects of quotas (Y. Lee 2019). Further, patronage-driven party lists in South Korea also deters women from contesting in single-member districts as political competition is tougher among candidates (Mobrand 2019). On the other hand, in Mongolia, gender quotas have positive long-term effects as they encourage networking

among polarizing actors and help to politicize women's issue (Maškarinec 2019). Broadly, the effects of electoral systems and quotas strategies are not mechanical but dependent on the degree of party system institutionalization, electoral competitiveness, legal enforcement, and socio-cultural attitudes towards women (Tan 2016b).

Asia also defies expectations on the correlations between quotas and regime type.⁴ Typically, studies tend to dismiss appointed quota

women in authoritarian regimes as symbolic figures and “window dressing” to improve international legitimacy (Truex 2016, 42). Yet, on average, the number of women parliamentarians in authoritarian and single-party regimes outperformed those in electoral democracies such as Indonesia, South Korea, India, and Japan.

One-party autocracies such as Afghanistan (24 percent), China (25 percent) and Vietnam (30 percent) have voluntarily adopted gender quotas and achieved higher levels of women legislative representation than electoral democracies such as Indonesia (17 percent), India (14 percent) and Japan (9 percent) – see Table 1.

Gender quotas serve important strategic role in autocracies. Joshi and Timothy’s work on Vietnam shows that its regime adopted gender quotas as part of its “autocratic adaptation” because co-opting women into the ruling elites helps to maintain regime stability (2018). Similarly in Singapore, I found the setting of a 30 percent target of women candidates by the ruling People’s Action Party raised not only women’s legislative presence but also boosts the party’s hegemonic position (2014; 2016a). These findings suggest that future work ought to go beyond numbers and focus on quotas women’s substantive roles and the policies they advocate.

Local Politics Matter

Like the extant global scholarship on gender quotas, work on Asia has focused on how gender quotas worked with its electoral system to generate the expected number of women candidates and parliamentarians at the national level. In Asia, 12 countries have established targets or seats reserved for women at the sub-regional or local governments, yet there are surprisingly few studies on quotas women leaders at the local levels. Work on local council women in Timor-Leste by Cummins (2011) and local women candidates in South Korea by Yoon and Shin (2017) are notable exceptions.

Local politics matter as it is an important supply of experienced women candidates with local knowledge who may filter up to national politics. Political parties in Asia are often family-run political dynasties that could pose barriers to women’s local participation,

followed by corruption and money-politics during elections (True et al. 2013, 34). Quotas countries such as the Philippines, Timor-Lest, Indonesia, or Mongolia with complex local politics are often overlooked. In Timor-Leste, more than 1,300 women occupy reserved seats on the 442 *suku* or local council. Yet, the lack of public attention given to the 1,300 women have “in effect rendered these women invisible” (Cummins 2011, 86). This oversight ought to be addressed.

Local and regional gender quotas could filter upwards and maintain a sustainable stream of women candidate. For example, Batto found that in Taiwan, quotas women in local

Asia provides a rich laboratory for future studies to incorporate various forms and sources of oppression such as ethnicity, class, religion, and other identity markers to reveal how the quota operate within the patriarchal structure to promote or deter women’s political participation.

council elections play a critical role in promoting female representation and filling the pipeline with capable women for higher office (2018). Yoon and Shin also found that in South Korea, strongly enforced quotas in the proportional representation tier of the mixed electoral system at the national level encourage women to participate in local politics. Yet, the lack of compliance with quotas by local party leaders remains a huge hurdle for women’s electoral success (2017). More attention on how women navigate local, dynastic or clientelistic politics to gain candidacy could help to reveal insights to supplement dominant institutionalist analysis.

Intersections with Ethnicity and Religion

Asia is a large continent with diverse religions, ethnicities, colonial backgrounds, and languages.⁵ Indeed, it is one of the most ethnically fractionalized regions in the world that has developed specific mechanisms such as reserved seats and candidate quotas to guarantee the political representation of ethnic minorities/Indigenous groups. I have

shown elsewhere⁶ that the adoption of ethnic quotas has occurred before gender quotas became a trend in the region.⁷ Yet, there is insufficient work on the interactions between gender and ethnic quotas, and their effects on the two respective groups in Asia. For example, in majoritarian systems such as in Singapore, Nepal and Vietnam, candidate quotas are adopted for their targeted ethnic minority groups. This places the responsibility of candidate selection solely on the party selectorate. This calls for more excavation work on the “secret garden of politics”: the intra-party politics of the nomination, selection, and attitudes towards women and ethnic minority candidates and parliamentarians. For example, while ethnic quotas in Singapore is found to have positive spillover effects on raising the number of female MPs (Tan 2014), we still do not know how the conflation of women with other protected minority groups in Nepal and the Philippines would advance women’s political representation or participation.

Further, in countries with both gender and ethnic quotas such as China, Taiwan, Pakistan, Nepal and the Philippines, how often are ethnic quotas women MPs treated as “double-barrel” representatives for both women and ethnic minority communities? Who do these ethnic quotas women represent? Studies show that the provisions of quotas for selected minority groups could negatively impact electoral competition (Sun 2015); pit women and minority groups against one another for legal and political status (Bekhoven 2016) and result in a lack of accountability to targeted communities or entrench negative societal views towards the targeted minority group (Franceschet et al. 2012). While quotas could raise the political status of women and minority groups, they may also end up entrenching the minority status of ethnic women.

Aside from incorporating ethnicity into gender quotas analysis, cross-country comparative would help our understanding of, for example, the experiences of Islamic women with respect to personal status, marriage, and family relations in quotas and non-quotas Muslim dominant countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan (see Fleschenberg and Derichs 2011; Rai et al. 2013). While Indone-

sia shows that Islam is not a barrier to women's nomination as legislative candidates, the interactions between traditional and modern governance in traditional societies with dynastic systems often render quotas women legislators as token and symbolic figures. This is evident in Timor-Leste. Despite having a high number of female parliamentarians, women elected under quotas struggle to make their mark in local and national politics due to patriarchal ideas within rural areas (Cummins 2011).

Asia provides a rich laboratory for future studies to incorporate various forms and sources of oppression such as ethnicity, class, religion, and other identity markers to reveal how the quotas operate within the patriarchal structure to promote or deter women's political participation. Recent work on Moro women in the Philippines by Sifris and Tan-yag (2019) and indigenous women in Taiwan (Huang 2012) offer some good examples to address the intersectional experience of Indigenous women in quotas countries.

More on Substantive Representation

Finally, more studies are needed on the substantive representation of quotas women legislators and policies enacted by them. Party politics literature shows that the influence of elected quotas representatives is often limited and channeled through parties instead of representatives (Htun 2004). Despite findings showing positive connection between descriptive and substantive representation of women in gender politics, we do not know enough on whether women leaders represent, advocate, and defend the interests of women in the different levels of government. Aside from methodological difficulties and debates over what constitutes women's issues, attempts to understand women's substantive impact are sometimes constrained by access to reliable data in autocracies. Besides, patriarchal values held by parties or rural villages could also obstruct work and studies on women.

There are ways to circumvent these challenges. For example, Shim's comparative work on South Korea and Taiwan based on individual-legislator sponsored bills found that quotas female legislators are more likely to promote women-friendly policies, especially when policy and electoral interests coincide (Shim

2021). Other studies on autocracies such as Shuler's use of survey studies of government performance in Vietnam provides a way to assess how women leaders could act as role models and reduce gender gaps in political knowledge (2019). Others include qualitative fieldwork in Zhejiang and Yunnan in China by Jacka and Sargeson (2015), which found that elected women leaders did not lead to more substantive representation at the local level, since villagers have little conception of gender interests and vary in their understanding of representation (Su 2006). These are encouraging studies which build theoretical and methodological knowledge and advance our understanding of the substantive roles and challenges of quotas women leaders.

Conclusion

Asia offers a rich laboratory for gender quotas studies. Moving ahead, studies need to go beyond numbers and national legislative politics to consider how local politics, ethnicity, religion, and other mechanisms intersect to promote an egalitarian culture conducive for women's candidacy and electoral success. Deepening gender quotas scholarship in this region would benefit from both in-depth case analysis and comparative work on the substantive representation of both quotas and non-quotas women leaders in all levels of government. Filling these knowledge gaps will help clear the path for more women to come forward and ensure a sustainable supply of women leaders.

Notes

¹ Gender quotas refer to the formal mechanisms such as the use of reserved seats, legal candidate quotas, and party quotas (voluntary and institutionalized) at the national or party levels that guarantee a specific number of seats or percentage for women mandated through constitutional and/legislative means (Dahlerup 2006).

² Reserved seats regulate the number of women elected, the other two mechanisms set a minimum for the share of women on the candidate lists, either as a legal requirement or a measure written into the party statutes.

³ This includes Vietnam's "target system"

which include ethnic minority, youth, non-party members or independents to ensure diverse representation in the political system (UNDP 2012, 14)

⁴ In Mongolia, the number of women in political office fell from 25 percent to 4 percent after the end of Communist one-party rule in 1990 (similar to patterns in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) (True et al. 2013, 12).

⁵ Depending on how one counts, there can be up to 48 countries included in "Asia."

⁶ While we focus on the legislative rules that ensure formal minority legislative representation in Asia, Reilly (2020) highlights a trend towards more aggregative processes and multi-ethnic institutions in the region.

⁷ Ethnic quotas adoption has occurred in waves over three historical periods; 1) the 1800s (e.g. New Zealand in 1867); 2) the post-colonization period after World War II (e.g. India, 1949; Samoa, 1962; Fiji, 1966; Taiwan, 1972; Pakistan, 1973); and 3) the post-third wave of democratization after the 1980s (e.g. Singapore 1988, Vietnam, 2007).

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HOW CAN WE MEASURE WOMEN'S SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION?

TOWARDS A DYNAMIC APPROACH

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Historically, women were excluded from politics, and still today women are underrepresented as members of parliament and in leadership roles in most democracies. In his 2022 speech on international women's day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlights the centrality of gender to dynamics at the very heart of politics: "Gender inequality is essentially a question of power, in a male-dominated world and a male-dominated culture."¹ Recent opposition from far right and anti-gender movements threatens further progress towards gender equality; in many areas, women's rights are moving backwards. It is thus vitally important to study questions about the substantive representation of women's interests. However, our exploration of these questions is hindered by data availability and measurement. In this short note, we highlight three major challenges to measuring the substantive representation (SR) of women's interests: 1) how to define SR; 2) the historical omission of SR from major datasets; and 3) the dynamic nature of SR. We then explore the extent to which recent advances in text analysis and machine learning methods can help us make progress on a dynamic method of measuring substantive representation.

Three Challenges to Measuring Women's Substantive Representation

What does it mean to represent women's interests? The first challenge to studying the SR of women is that there is no consensus in the gender and politics literature on how to define the concept. One of the reasons for this is that women are not a monolithic group. Iris Marion Young discusses this paradox in her theory of group representation as difference: "The idea of group representation [...] presumes that a group of

women, or African Americans, or Maori, has some set of common attributes or interests which can be represented. But this is usually false. Differences of race and class cut across gender, differences of gender and ethnicity cut across religion, and so on" (Young 1997, p.351). Nonetheless, when people discuss for example the potential effects of women's descriptive representation (their presence in political offices) on the substantive representation of their interests, they often have in mind a specific set of issues or policies. Many of these are captured by political science research. Studies in the field of gender and politics offer a range of possible measures of substantive representation. As Table 1 shows, common definitions are based on a wide variety of criteria such as: feminist theory about rights and equality, women's interest group demands, the specific salience of some issues to women's bodies, "traditional" issues of the private sphere, and gender gaps in policy preferences and priorities.

The second challenge researchers face is one of omission. Important cross-national timeseries datasets do not code for attention to women as a group or gender-related concerns. Historically, empirical political science did not include gender as a category of analysis and failed to consider women as political beings (Lovenduski 1998). Still today, many of the largest datasets measuring the representation of issues at party and government level do not capture women's interests. For example, the Comparative Manifesto Project, the most comprehensive source available measuring party attention to different issues across countries and over time, does not include distinct categories for attention to women or other issues of interest to women, like work-

family policies or gender equality (Volkens et al. 2021).² The Chapel Hill Expert Study, which estimates party positions over time based on a series of expert surveys, also does not code for party positions specific to women’s interests or gender equality alone (Jolly et al. 2022).³ The Comparative Agendas Project, which measures trends in policymaking over time, codes for gender discrimination and child care, but it lacks distinct codes for other relevant interests like gender-based violence or reproductive rights (Baumgartner, Breunig & Grossman 2019). With this existing data, it is difficult to study how attention and positions towards women’s SR have evolved over time.

Table 1: Identifying common formulations of women’s substantive representation

Definition	Examples	References
1) Women’s rights/ Feminist issues	Reproductive rights, freedom from violence	Franceschet & Piscopo 2008; Htun, Lacalle & Micozzi 2013
2) Gender differences in policy preferences or priorities	Left-Right self- placement, policies that enable mothers to work, e.g. child care, parental leave, health policy	Homola 2019; Reher 2018; Weeks 2022; Yildirim 2022
3) Women’s interest group demands	Gender equality, reproductive rights, opposition to abortion	Schreiber 2002; Washington 2008
4) Issues that disproportionately affect women	References to women, maternity and child care leave, women’s health	Clayton, Josefsson & Wang 2017; Kittilson 2008; O’Brien 2018
5) Gendered social roles/public VS private sphere	Children and families, welfare, care for disadvantaged, e.g., poverty relief	Funk & Philips 2019; Hargrave 2022

Finally, the third challenge to measuring women’s substantive representation is that women’s interests change over time and across different contexts. It is easy to see this when considering SR as gender gaps in policy preferences. While in Pakistan and India women prioritize goods and services that benefit them relatively more than men, like drinking water (Chattopadhyay & Duflo 2004; Kahn 2022; Prillaman 2022), in high income democracies the policies at stake for men and women are very different. In this context, large gender gaps emerge in support for maternal employment, with women more likely to support mothers working and policies that facilitate this like child care (Burlacu & Lu̇histe 2021; Busemeyer & Neimanns 2017; Weeks 2022). Intersectional approaches to SR also highlight the distinct preferences of different groups within the broad category of women, which are driven by their varying contextual lived experiences; for example, African American women are more likely to highlight criminal justice as a priority than white women (Smooth 2011, see also Yildirim 2022). Working class women who become politicians prioritize spending in areas that reflect their particular experiences in education and social services (Barnes, Beall & Holman 2021). Some (feminist) women’s interest groups demand reproductive rights (Washington 2008), other (conservative) women’s interest groups demand an end to abortion (Schreiber 2002). Even when operationalizing women’s SR as women’s rights, which we might think of as a

more universal definition, normative thinking about the rights afforded to women has shifted over time (Okin 1982), and the way that women’s rights are understood will undoubtedly continue to evolve in the future. Thus, especially when considering longitudinal and cross-country analysis, it is difficult for static measures of SR to accurately account for the complexity of women’s interests. As a consequence, a dynamic measure of substantive representation has great potential for exploring context-specific SR with greater validity and improving our overall understanding of women’s substantive representation.

Towards a Dynamic Measure: Machine Learning Application

How can text analysis tools and machine learning approaches help to address some of these challenges? Given that these are computational methods, they cannot help us overcome the first challenge: a definition of women’s SR should ideally be theoretically guided and motivated. However, making use of these recent methodological advances can help us tackle the second and third challenge we discuss above. First, we can reuse some of the data collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project for example and try to create measures of women’s SR even though these data were not originally coded in such a way. In doing so, it is possible to collect and analyze data at a much larger scale than by more traditional hand-coding approaches. Second, the methods that we will use below are very flexible and can easily be adapted to different and changing contexts. For example, it is relatively easy to change dictionary words and/or training sets to adjust for changing environments across space or over time.

For our applications, we build upon recent work by Meguid et al. (2022), who hand-code the manifestos of populist radical right parties based on the attention they pay to women’s interests across three specific topics: i) gender equality, ii) violence against women, and iii) work-family balance, and their positions (gender egalitarian or traditional) on these interests. Meguid et al. (2022) first use a dictionary method to identify relevant sentences and then verify manually whether each of these sentences indeed addresses one of the three topics. Based on the sentences they identify, we run two separate text analysis models to explore how purely computational methods compare: a Wordfish model (Slapin & Proksch, 2008) and a structural topic model (STM, Roberts et al. 2014).

Wordfish is a scaling technique that uses word frequencies to determine the position of documents on a one-dimensional space. In our case, we combine all sentences Meguid et al. (2022) identified in a given manifesto and treat them as one document. This means that the model will ultimately give us one position score for each manifesto, which is based only on text identified as relevant to women’s interests.⁴

These scores are shown in Figure 1. When working with manifesto data, Wordfish models are usually used to estimate positions on the left-right scale. However, since we are only working with sentences related to the three women’s interest topics identified by Meguid et al. (2022) within populist radical right parties, our scores will not reflect a manifesto’s overall left-right position and it is instead up to the researcher to identify the meaning of the scale.

Figure 1: Wordfish scores for 105 populist radical right parties

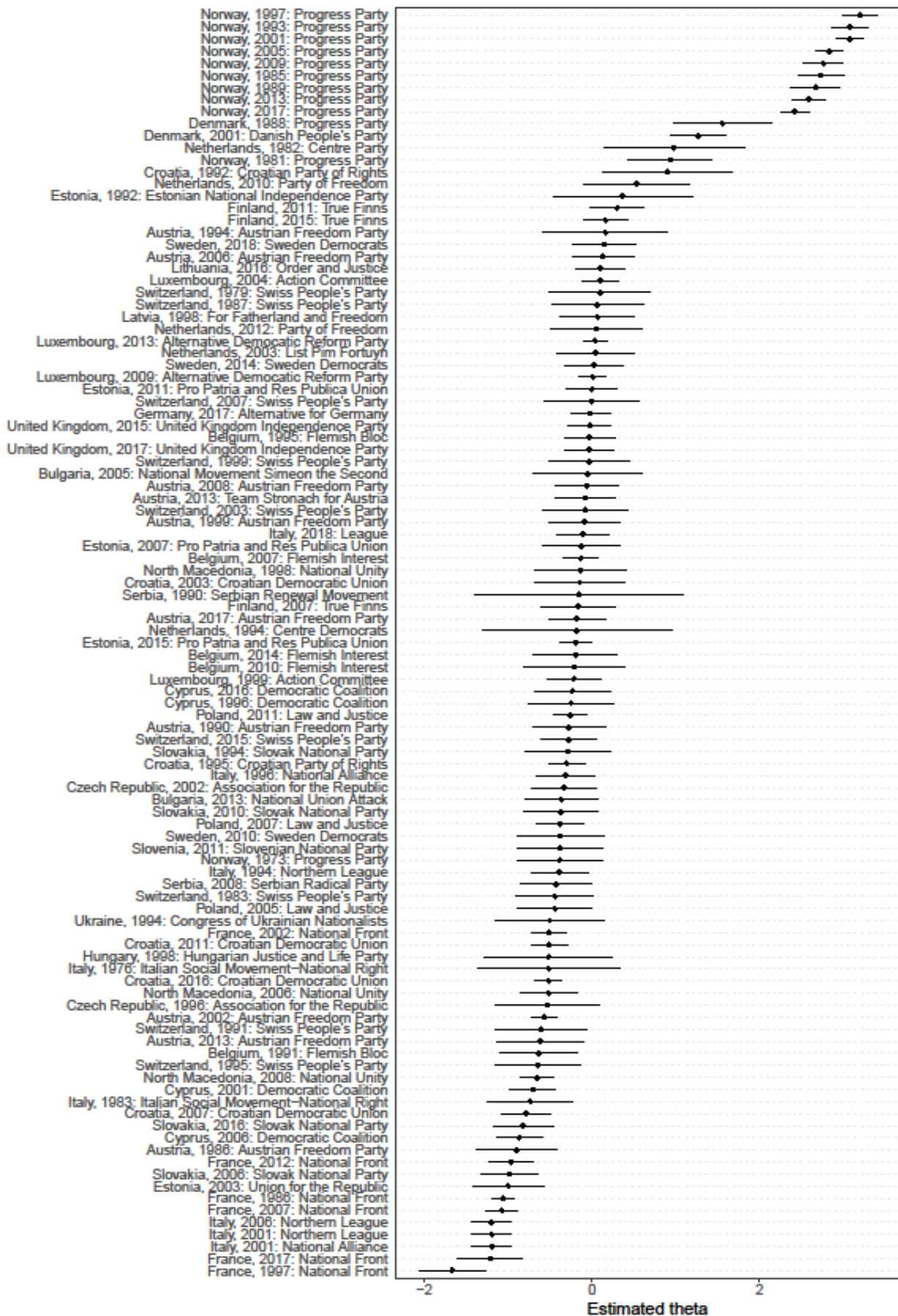
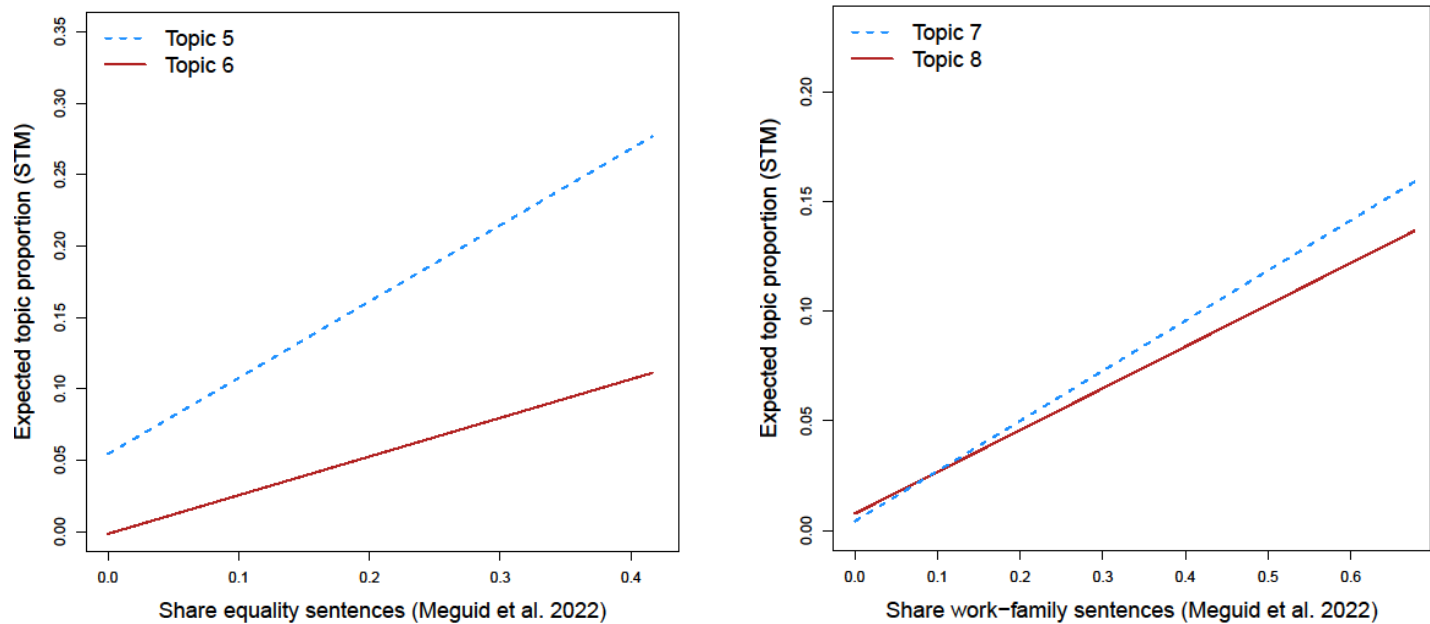


Figure 2: Correlations between STM-based and hand-coded topics



Trying to determine what underlying concept the scale might capture, a strong geographic clustering stands out. Based on Figure 1, there is a strong contrast between the populist radical right parties from Scandinavia and the Baltic countries on the one hand and France and Italy on the other hand. However, when inspecting the most influential words (not shown), no clear latent concept emerges. Moreover, when we correlate each manifesto’s position with the attention paid to gender equality, violence against women, and work-family issues as coded by Meguid et al. (2022), the three correlations range from -0.07 to 0.01.⁵ In other words, the Wordfish scores seem to capture something that is distinct from these three topics.

Table 2: FREX words for selected STM topics			
Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8
rights	women	allowance	support
equal	men	pay	families
human	equality	leave	pension
society	rights	benefit	services

A couple of alternative explanations seem most likely to us: first, perhaps the scores are mostly picking up on regional similarities and differences. This could be the case if parties from neighboring countries use similar language and/or if they appear similar when translated into English. This might be especially likely if we assume that parties might be

influenced by the policies of similar parties in neighboring countries. Second, when looking at the most influential words, we noticed that words like “welfare”, “service”, and “social security” were especially prevalent among the Nordic parties, whereas terms such as “birth rates”, “benefits”, and “allowances” were more common in Italy and France. So it is also possible that these parties simply approach policies related to women and gender in different ways. While regional differences and the prevalence of different types of social policies could indeed represent interesting findings, they do not speak directly to the main outcomes of interest to the researchers here (i.e., attention to and positions on women’s interests).

In a second exercise, we also run a structural topic model (STM, Roberts et al. 2014). STMs assume that any text (i.e., our manifestos) is a combination of different underlying topics. These topics are not directly observed, but instead can be inferred based on words that tend to appear in connection with one another. Based on these words, STMs identify the share of each text that belongs to a certain topic. Here we build on a small but growing line of studies that use STMs to study gender and politics. For example, Kroeber (2022) studies debates in German parliaments, McDonald, Porter & Treul (2020) analyze biographies on candidates’ websites, Nielsen (2020) examines online posts of Salafi

preachers, Gilardi & Wüest (2017) look at how newspapers cover campaigns, and Ono & Miwa (2022) uses an STM to identify whether female and male Japanese candidates discuss different topics in their manifestos. However, to the best of our knowledge, STMs have not yet been used to study women’s SR across different countries and over time.

In a first attempt to do just that, we run a STM on the same populist radical right parties’ manifestos we also used for the Wordfish exercise. After trying models with different numbers of topics and analyzing measures of fit as well as the coherence of the created topics, we decide on a model with 10 topics (incidentally, this is the same number used by Nielsen, 2020). Of these 10 topics, we find four particularly interesting. Table 2 displays some of their FREX words (words that maximize frequency and exclusivity).

Tying back these topics to the coding scheme used by Meguid et al. (2022), topics 5 and 6 seem to most closely reflect their equality dimension (i.e., talking about women, men, rights, and equality for example). Topics 7 and 8 focus more on families, allowances, benefits, and support, so seem more closely related to the work-family topic Meguid et al. (2022) measure. To see whether the topics as estimated by the STM do indeed align with the hand-coded manifes-

tos, we can look at the correlation between the two at the manifesto level.

This is what we do in Figure 2. In the left panel, we show the correlation between topics 5 and 6 as estimated by the STM along the y-axis and the share of equality sentences as coded by Meguid et al. (2022) along the x-axis. The right panel shows the correlation between topics 7 and 8 as estimated by the STM along the Y-axis and the share of hand-coded work family sentences along the X-axis. In both panels we can see clear positive correlations for each of the two topics. In other words, manifestos that have more hand-coded sentences focusing on equality (work-family) topics also feature a higher share of topics 5 and 6 (7 and 8) as estimated by the STM.⁶ These patterns are reassuring and promising: they clearly demonstrate that the inductive STM approach can capture attention to women's interests in meaningful ways.

Of course, this approach also has its limitations. We note that not all latent topics that emerged in this application made clear sense to us; some were quite broad. It is up to the researcher to identify which topics are most meaningful for isolating relevant themes given the unique context and argument. Because of this, we suggest that researchers would do well to define clear a priori predictions of the latent topics they expect to emerge, ideally formally in a pre-analysis plan.

Conclusion

Measuring women's substantive representation across different countries and over long periods of time is difficult. In this short note, we have highlighted three main reasons for this: defining SR is challenging to begin with given that women are not one monolithic group, measures of women's SR are unfortunately often missing from major datasets, and women's SR is dynamic in nature (and therefore ideally requires a flexible measure).

In an attempt to overcome the latter two of these challenges, we then applied two popular text analysis techniques to a corpus of statements from populist radical right parties regarding three women's interest topics. While our Wordfish analysis revealed interesting patterns, the underlying dimension it recovered was not immediately interpreta-

ble. A 10 topic STM on the other hand provided estimates that nicely aligned with the original hand-coding by Meguid et al. (2022).

We hope that these results will encourage more work that tries to harness recent advances in text analysis and machine learning in order to better and more widely measure women's substantive representation. In addition, if successfully implemented, these tools can of course be used to describe and predict many other important phenomena and aspects of representation, such as the substantive representation of other historically marginalized groups.

Notes

¹ Video Message by António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on International Women's Day 2022, March 5, 2022.

² Instead, scholars often resort to using a number of specific categories that they think most closely reflect women's interests (e.g., categories 503, 504, and 506 reflecting Social Justice, Welfare State Expansion, and Education Expansion respectively; see Kitilson (2011)).

³ Both the CMP and CHES include gender equality as components of broader categories.

⁴ Before running the Wordfish models, we follow best practices and pre-process the data by removing all punctuation and special characters. We also remove stop words, convert all words to lower case, and only keep words that were used at least 25 times. This leaves us with a total of 105 manifestos from 27 countries.

⁵ Similarly, when we create measures that capture whether a manifesto talks about gender issues in a more egalitarian or more traditional way and correlate these with the Wordfish scores, the correlations range from -0.01 to 0.26.

⁶ For each of these panel figures, we observe moderate correlations (above 0.3) between at least one topic and the hand-coded data, which are statistically significant at conventional levels.

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MEASURING GENDER QUOTAS

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Gender quotas are the most common type of electoral reform in recent decades.¹ A robust and growing literature investigates the origins and outcomes of these policies. Much of this work draws on case studies because, until recently, large-N cross-national data was limited.² Published in 2017, the Quota Adoption and Reform over Time (QAROT) dataset alleviates many of these challenges through its broad spatial and temporal scope.³ Covering 190 countries from 1947 to 2015, QAROT provides opportunities to expand our understanding of gender quotas over time and in diverse contexts. It allows researchers to investigate long-run trends in quota adoption, reform, and implementation globally.

QAROT includes easy-to-use, off-the-shelf dichotomous measures of gender quotas. For those interested in studying why countries decide to adopt quotas (as their dependent variable), QAROT has a dichotomous variable that flags the year a gender quota is first adopted.⁴ Likewise, for those interested in exploring the effects of quotas (as their independent variable), QAROT contains a dummy variable coded as “1” for all country-years where a quota law was present and also includes a variable denoting type of quota policy (i.e. reserved seats, candidate quota, or both).

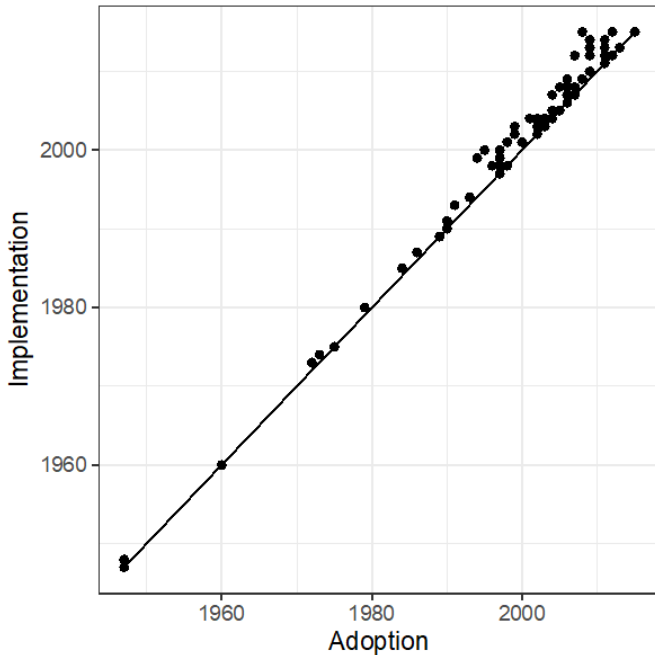
Moreover, QAROT goes beyond these simple classifications to provide more nuanced data on gender quotas than was previously available in any published dataset. For example, one of the biggest contributions of the QAROT is the distinction between adoption and implementation. As illustrated in Figure 1, countries often adopt a quota law but do not implement it until the next election (and sometimes for a longer period or not at all). This is particularly important for scholars studying the effects of quotas on women’s descriptive representation because it reduces

potential errors introduced by lags between adoption and implementation. Accounting for this lag, QAROT includes a dummy variable accounting for whether the quota law was implemented and has a separate variable flagging the first year of implementation. This variable shows that on average, countries take about 1.4 years to implement a quota law after its passage. However, 26 (out of 95, or 27 percent) quotas adopted within the dataset took two or more years to implement and another eleven quotas (12 percent) were never implemented at all.

The QAROT dataset also provides information about *de facto threshold* of quotas. In some cases, like South Korea, quotas only apply to a subset of seats in the parliament. As a result, as illustrated in Figure 2, regressions may underestimate the effect of quotas on women’s representation outcomes if scholars use the raw or specified threshold. To account for this, the QAROT dataset includes information about the percentage of seats to which the quota applies and then multiplies this by the stated threshold to calculate a *de facto threshold*.

Finally, QAROT is a rich source of nuanced information on how countries implement and reform quotas over time. The dataset moves beyond the simple “seats” versus “candidates” distinction by providing information about how reserved seats are filled and whether candidate quotas include sanctions for non-compliance and placement mandates. QAROT combines information on the *de facto threshold* and mechanisms for filling seats to operationalize a measure of “effective quotas”, which will be useful for differentiating policy motivations and outcomes. And QAROT includes information about reforms to quota policies over time, including when these occur and how many. These variables will be useful for studies moving beyond the adoption event to

Figure 1. Illustrating the lag in the implementation of quotas using the QAROT dataset.



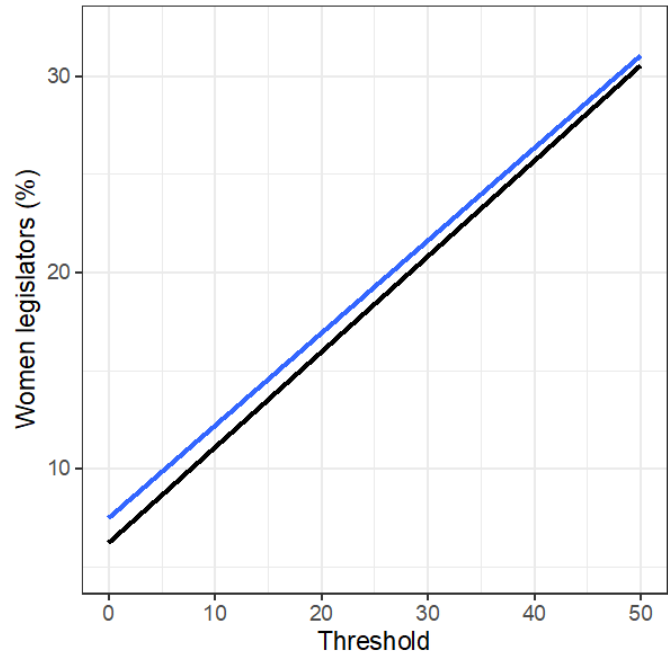
investigate micro-policy changes over time both for large-N work and small-N case studies.

The QAROT dataset only includes *formal* state policies codified through the country's electoral law or constitution for the national-level legislature. This approach has two potential limitations. First, it does not capture "soft-quotas," which were common for many leftist regimes during the Cold War, or voluntary party quotas, which are quite common today.⁵ Second, QAROT does not include information on gender quotas for other public offices. For example, scholars who are interested in how gender quotas work at the subnational level will need to look elsewhere for this data.

Despite these limitations, the QAROT dataset provides the most comprehensive and nuanced data on gender quotas currently available. QAROT is co-authored by some of the leading scholars on women and politics, including Melanie M. Hughes, Pamela Paxton, Amanda Clayton, and Pär Zetterberg. It is already being used by many scholars and received high praise from the academic community. Since its publication, QAROT has been downloaded over 400 times and its journal article in *Comparative Politics* has over 80 citations. QAROT received the coveted Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba Dataset Award from the Comparative Politics section at APSA earlier this year.

The growing usage and praise for QAROT is not surprising. Its broad spatial and temporal scope allows researchers to re-evaluate existing theories about the causes and consequences of gender quotas. Furthermore, the QAROT dataset's fine-grained data on the implementation of gender quotas opens avenues for future research on how quotas work. The approach taken in the QAROT dataset could be reproduced for other groups, such as ethnic minorities, youth, and persons with disabilities, as well as other offices like subnational legislatures. As such, the QAROT dataset makes a valuable contribu-

Figure 2. Comparing results from a simple bivariate regression with the specified threshold (black) and de facto threshold (blue) of gender quotas from the QAROT dataset.



tion to the study of gender quotas and the comparative politics subfield.

Notes

¹ Clayton, Amanda. 2021. "How do Electoral Gender Quotas Affect Policy?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24:235-252; Edgell, Amanda B. 2016. "Foreign Aid, Democracy, and Gender Quota Laws." *Democratization*, 24, no.6: 1103-1141; Krook, Mona Lena. 2014. "Electoral Gender Quotas: A Conceptual Analysis." *Comparative Political Studies*, 47, no. 9: 1268-1293.

² For example, as the leading reference on the topic, International IDEA provides detailed and up-to-date information on quotas around the world in its Gender Quotas Database; however, researchers need to extract and preprocess the data before using it in their preferred statistical software. Furthermore, IDEA has limited time-series coverage of quotas. *Gender Quotas Database*. 2022. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). URL: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>

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⁴ In particular, this variable will be most useful in event history applications.

⁵ *Gender Quotas Database*. 2022. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). URL: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>



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