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Long-term impacts of parliamentary gender quotas in a single-party system: Symbolic co-option or delayed integration?

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Long-term impacts of parliamentary gender quotas in a single-party system: Symbolic co-option or delayed integration?

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Abstract
In recent years scholars have shifted their attention from the causes behind parliamentary gender quotas to their consequences for women's descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. We contribute to this literature by focusing on long-term effects of gender quotas in the context of an authoritarian one-party system. Here we contest dominant theoretical explanations which posit that gender quotas in authoritarian states primarily serve the goals of symbolic co-option and window-dressing. Rather, we argue that while authoritarian adaptation may motivate the introduction of gender quotas, these quotas may result over time in what we call a *delayed integration* process featuring a gradual rise of women into arenas of power alongside increasing professionalization and capabilities of women within parliament. This argument is tested and supported via a 72-year longitudinal analysis of over 6000 female and male representatives of the Vietnamese National Assembly, a single-party parliament with long-standing gender quotas.

Keywords
Representation, gender quotas, one-party system, parliament, Vietnam, women

Introduction

Critics may argue that parliamentary gender quotas in single-party regimes are merely symbolic window-dressing, but how do we explain the following? In 2016, Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân was elected Chairperson (the most powerful position) of the Vietnamese National Assembly (VNA) while Mrs. Tòng Thị Phóng became one of four Deputy Chairpersons. The same year women doubled their numbers from 11 to 21 on influential parliamentary committees dealing with law, national defense, and judicial affairs while climbing to 27% of all members of parliament (MPs) and 28% of standing committee members. What explains these gains? Might they have resulted from the

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country's parliamentary gender quotas? Addressing the issue of how quotas impact women's representation, this article examines an area receiving relatively little scholarly attention: long-term effects of gender quotas in authoritarian single-party state regimes.

Here we contest the dominant view that gender quotas in authoritarian states primarily serve the goal of symbolic window-dressing. Rather, we see quotas in contemporary single-party regimes as often indicative of 'autocratic adaptation' whereby new groups (including women) are incorporated into the ruling elite to 'help regime elites maintain their dominant position and hierarchical authority over society' (Stacher, 2012: 21). In our view, *co-option* may motivate the introduction of gender quotas in single-party regimes, but over time these quotas may result in *delayed integration* allowing for incremental growth in women's parliamentary numbers and influence. We test and find support for these expectations in Vietnam, a crucial test case due to its long duration of gender quotas.

Our article begins with a brief literature review on how quotas can impact women's integration in one-party legislatures. We then contrast three competing theoretical frameworks for understanding gender quotas in authoritarian regimes. The following section explains our methodology involving a longitudinal analysis of 6257 VNA members over 72 years from 1946 to the present. Focusing on multiple empirically testable propositions, our analysis finds the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP)'s first parliamentary gender quota adopted in 1967 indicative of *symbolic co-option*, while its second gender quota introduced in 1994 has prompted *delayed integration*. The article concludes with reflections on the generalizability of our case analysis and suggestions for future research.

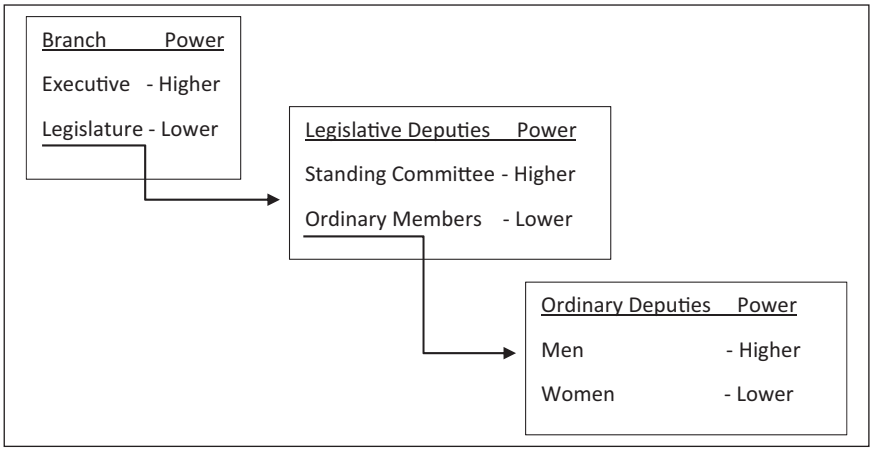
Literature review and hypotheses

Our study brings together insights from scholarly literature on single-party legislatures and gender quotas. As the majority of countries now have some kind of parliamentary gender quota (Paxton and Hughes, 2015), researchers have studied their causes and consequences in two waves of scholarship (e.g. Krook and Zetterberg, 2014). First, they have examined the adoption and implementation of different types of gender quotas (i.e. reserved seats, party candidate quotas, and statutory quotas) (e.g. Dahlerup, 2006). Second, scholars have analyzed how quotas impact women's descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation (e.g. Franceschet et al., 2012). Longer-term studies have also contrasted the respective impacts of gender quotas on incremental versus fast-track (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005) and continuous vs episodic (Hughes and Paxton, 2008) growth in numbers of female members of parliament (FMPs).

Beyond descriptive representation, scholars have also examined path dependent 'acceleration' and 'snowball' effects whereby women's influence in parliament increases over time as well as stigmatization and backlash scenarios whereby short-term gains in women's numerical representation are followed by longer-term exclusion of women from positions of authority or diminished opportunities to be re-elected (e.g. O'Brien and Rickne, 2016; Shin, 2014). Another prominent dichotomy contrasts mandate and label effects concerning whether 'quota women' take up an active 'mandate' to substantively represent women or avoid doing so due to a stigmatizing 'label' that they are only in parliament to represent women (e.g. Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008).

Turning to one-party states, studies often find that quota women broaden the discourse and help enact laws supporting women in countries such as Rwanda (e.g. Devlin and Elgie, 2008), Tanzania (e.g. Yoon, 2013), and Uganda (e.g. Muriaas and Wang, 2012; Tamale, 1999). Some studies also find that FMPs (s)elected with the help of gender quotas are increasingly more 'professional' and 'qualified' in terms of being better educated and experienced than in the past (e.g. Beer and Camp, 2016; Josefsson, 2014). Yet, cross-national comparisons also find FMPs are often younger and have different occupational profiles than male members of parliament (MMPs) (Joshi and Och, 2014).

Figure 1. Typical 20th century power hierarchies in communist single-party states.



Building on these insights, we examine whether quotas lead to FMPs structurally having little influence compared to MMPs (*symbolic co-option*) or to a transition over time in the direction of women and men having equal influence (*integration*) within autocratic legislatures. Focusing on FMPs' *presence, voice, experience*, and *training*, we pay special attention to MPs' power resources in terms of human capital (i.e. incumbency and educational qualifications) and pivotal positions held within the assembly (i.e. committees and leadership) before and after gender quota adoption.

We posit that parliamentary gender quotas may lead to three possible outcomes: (a) *symbolic co-option* of women whereby the number of women in parliament initially increases after quota introduction but ultimately stagnates with women continuing to have minimal influence within parliament (due to factors such as relative exclusion from leadership bodies or having less experience and qualifications than MMPs); (b) women's *rapid integration* into the parliamentary mainstream whereby women quickly (in the space of just a few elections) achieve a level of influence within parliament that is comparable to men (observable in measures such as qualifications and positions on leadership bodies); or (c) a *delayed integration* whereby women's presence and influence gradually moves closer towards that of MMPs, leading to a slow, gradual, and partial erosion of male control over parliament.

To elaborate, in stable authoritarian single-party systems with a 'minimal legislature' (Mezey, 1979) reservations for targeted groups may simply be 'window dressing.' As Truex (2016: 42) points out, 'the rubber stamp or window dressing view embodies the idea that regimes use parliaments to provide nominal legitimacy to their legislative initiatives…Deputies are selected based on loyalty, not necessarily the quality of their representative activities.' For instance, communist one-party states often feature three levels of hierarchy (see Figure 1). First, the legislature is subservient to the executive – it has much less influence over policy. Second, ordinary deputies are subordinate to elite deputies but serve the functions of symbolic inclusion, consultation, and mobilization (Mezey 1979, Nelson and White, 1982, O'Brien, 1990). In other words, within the legislature some MPs (mostly party elites) are chosen for their technical abilities or leadership roles, while others are chosen 'for show' to make the institution look like the population. Thirdly, FMPs may additionally be subordinate to MMPs. While all deputies in these regimes may seem like tokens (Dahlerup, 2006: 13; O'Brien, 1990: 21), men may still be more powerful than women among ordinary deputies (Nelson and White, 1982: 193).

For instance, to improve a nation's international image, ruling elites may practice 'the mere symbolic inclusion of women in politics in order to make the country appear "modern"' (Dahlerup, 2006: 4) while 'at the same time [quotas] may reinforce established party dynamics that are based on, for instance, co-option and social control' (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2016: 482). While co-option via state-led corporatism is common in one-party systems (Muriaas and Wang, 2012), a key analytical question for scholars is how social groups are *integrated* – are they brought in as subservient junior partners or treated as relatively equal to other groups sanctioned for official representation by the ruling elite? Here the concept of *integration* refers to 'the acceptance on the part of primary, bureaucratic, and associational groups of the fact that other group interests are legitimate and must also be satisfied' with gender quotas potentially advancing integration by defining a constituency, formally notifying what deviations from equality are acceptable, and by signaling to political elites and the public that a group has an upgraded status (Grossholtz, 1970: 94).

If, as implied above, *integration* is a tool of recruitment into the political elite, then it must ultimately involve membership in and leadership of key decision-making bodies such as parliamentary committees and for women in these bodies to possess similar aptitudes or qualifications as men. By contrast, *symbolic co-option* implies that women selected to join a legislature are less powerful than men on multiple dimensions to ensure 'that legislative bodies are filled with the voice of the weak rather than the power of a vital opposition' (Muriaas and Wang, 2012: 310). Under these circumstances, women would be generally excluded from key parliamentary committees and leadership positions and women would likely have putatively 'inferior' educational levels, professional backgrounds, and parliamentary experience compared to men.

However, we hypothesize that a gender quota originally aiming only to increase women's presence (*symbolic co-option*) may over time result in substantial increases in women's influence (*delayed integration*) whereby after multiple electoral cycles, a socialization effect and generational shift might naturalize and legitimate women's presence in the assembly enabling women to gradually advance within the institution even in the absence of inter-party competition.[1] As Anne Marie Goetz (2003: 40) points out, women's political effectiveness depends on whether they gain access, presence, or influence – the latter (which is most important) occurs under 'accountability mechanisms' that 'incorporate women's concerns and preferences' such as women's participation in influential parliamentary committees and leadership positions.

The preceding discussion invokes several testable propositions regarding FMPs' *presence, voice, training*, and *experience*. Concerning *presence*, under a delayed integration scenario we expect FMP numbers to gradually increase over time with low volatility whereas under symbolic co-option FMP numbers would likely stagnate or decline after an initial quota boost. By contrast under rapid integration, FMP numbers would rise quickly towards a level of 40–60% of parliamentary members and remain high due to restructuring of electoral laws, constituency districts, or gender quotas to sustain women's presence close to parity. As for *voice*, under delayed integration the legislative committee assignments of FMPs and MMPs and the gender composition of committee leadership would gradually converge over time whereas under rapid integration this would occur much more quickly. By contrast, under symbolic co-option women would remain excluded from important leadership positions and confined to less prestigious and less powerful committees.

Regarding *training*, under rapid integration FMPs' educational training (years and fields of study) would quickly converge with MMPs, a process that that would take place more gradually under delayed integration. By contrast, under symbolic co-option FMP educational training would remain below that of MMPs. Lastly, concerning *experience*, in a rapid (or delayed) integration scenario we would see FMPs' ages and incumbency rates quickly (or gradually) converge towards MMPs whereas under symbolic co-option, FMPs would sustain a divergent age profile (younger) and (lower) incumbency rates than MMPs.

To sum up, the distinction between symbolic co-option, delayed integration, and rapid integration goes well beyond mere numbers. Under *symbolic co-option* we would expect women in parliament to be relatively younger, newcomers, inexperienced, less educated, not sit on committees, and not be leaders. With *delayed integration* we would expect women legislators to be older, experienced, well-educated, and present on important committees and in leadership positions. These latter outcomes would likewise be observed under *rapid integration* but would occur in a much shorter time frame.

Methodology

Our longitudinal study illustrates the pattern of a shift from *symbolic co-option* under a first gender quota to *delayed integration* after a second quota was adopted. To test our theoretical expectations, our within-case analysis compares FMPs' and MMPs' presence (numbers), voice (on committees and leadership positions), experience (age and incumbency), and educational training: (a) prior to quota introduction; (b) while a 1st party quota was in place; and (c) after a 2nd party quota was adopted. Our analysis also examines historical developments in and surrounding the assembly to better understand patterns of observed change.

The case we examine is Vietnam, the Asian country with the highest share of women in parliament over the past 50 years (Joshi and Kingma, 2013: 361). This case selection has three particular advantages. First, Vietnam introduced parliamentary gender quotas earlier than most countries (starting in 1967, later revised in 1994) allowing for longitudinal analysis. Both its 1967 and 1994 quotas were at the party level, specifying minimum numbers (or proportions) of women to be nominated and elected by the VCP in the VNA and sub-national people's councils. While Vietnam has no reserved seats or women's constituencies *per se*, the VCP has such strong influence over nomination, placement, and campaigns it means in effect allocating a minimum number of seats to women.

Second, under the hegemony of the VCP, Vietnam is a regime that claims to prioritize social, economic, and *gender* egalitarianism and therefore is a *most-likely case* (Eckstein, 1975) for women's advance within parliament. Vietnam has historically had higher gender equality than many other countries, its female labor force participation is the highest in Asia, its 1946 Constitution stipulates the right to gender equality, and the VCP has approved the pursuit of gender equality by the Viet Nam Women's Union, a mass organization under the state's corporatist structure with over 12 million members (Turley, 1972; Vandenbeld and Ly, 2012; Vo, 2008).[2]

Thirdly, Vietnam has publicly available historical data on its national assembly members and their personal characteristics. Hence, we have followed the longitudinal models applied by Josefsson (2014) in Uganda and Beer and Camp (2016) to the Mexican Senate by compiling historical biographical data of all VNA delegates from the 1st to the 14th assemblies from 1946 to the present (n = 6267 seats: 4921 males; 1346 females). Given that many of the VNA's deliberations and documents are not made public and interviewees who reveal such information may be subjected to retribution we have followed a path trodden by previous scholarship on the VNA relying heavily on legislator biographies though over a much longer period than previous studies (e.g. Malesky and Shuler, 2009, 2013).

Our analysis applies a historical institutional perspective recognizing that once institutions are established they may 'take on a life of their own' (Stacher, 2012: 36). Recognizing that long-term effects may involve '*by-products* of social processes rather than embodying the goals of social actors' (Pierson, 2004: 15), we remained open to the possibility that sociological variables such as generational shifts, the expansion of formal schooling, and changing global norms around women in politics may intersect with regime ideology and institutional reservations. Our analysis also identified 'critical periods' under which 'forces acting during a developmental window…have

enduring effects, continuing over many years' (Hughes and Paxton, 2008: 250). As discussed below, actions taken during these critical periods appear to have strongly impacted patterns of change, lock-in, and ratcheting up effects whereby 'initial increases may generate a positive feedback loop that then makes it more difficult to remove women from the system' (Hughes and Paxton, 2008: 248).

The case of Vietnam

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is an authoritarian regime ruled by the VCP in partnership with the Vietnamese Fatherland Front, an umbrella group of mass organizations. With the aim of building a 'socialist state ruled by law', the VNA (*quốc hội*) is a body of nearly 500 members that is relatively 'depoliticized', 'administrative', and 'managerial' compared to Western democratic legislatures, but all of its members are elected via direct universal suffrage (Salomon, 2007: 201, 205). While still a 'minimal legislature' (Mezey, 1979), the VNA has grown in influence since the adoption of economic reform and opening (*đổi mới*) after 1986 (Pham, 2014). Over the past 25 years, reforms have increased full-time VNA delegates from 20 to nearly 200, allowed self-nominated candidates, doubled VNA sittings to twice per year, expanded VNA research capacities, enabled MPs to call no-confidence votes against senior officials, and introduced nationally televised query sessions (*chất vấn*) where government leaders must respond to pointed questions from MPs (Malesky and Schuler, 2009; Salomon, 2007).

Compared to most communist legislatures, VNA elections are more competitive: at least two (typically 40–50% of) candidates lose in each of the VNA's 184 multi-member electoral districts, while candidate-to-seat ratios have increased over time from 1.24 to 1.74 between 1981 and 2016 (Malesky and Schuler, 2009: 42; *Tuổi Trẻ News*, 2016). Nevertheless, the VCP still overridingly determines the VNA's 'structure' to ensure descriptive representation of various population groups including women, ethnic minorities, youth, the military, business, scientists, farmers, workers, and government officials based on the ideal that 'the legislature must be the nation in miniature in order to make the right decisions' (Salomon, 2007: 206). In order to meet all these targets, 'a candidate, often a female, is selected to fulfil a number of quotas reflecting age, ethnic background and other criteria in addition to her gender' while typically competing against men with more experience and qualifications (Munro, 2012: 14). Given this context, essentially all FMPs in Vietnam can be regarded as 'quota women' given VCP dominance over candidate selection.[3]

Prior to instituting quotas, Vietnam's first 1946 Constitution set a positive benchmark for gender equality by stating in Article 9 that 'women and men have equal rights in all areas'. Reaffirming this principle, its 1960 Constitution states in Article 24 that 'Women in the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of political, economic, cultural, social, and domestic life' (Truong, 2008: 16; Vo, 2008: 227). Despite these early commitments, only during the turmoil and upheavals of the American War (1964–1975) did the VCP Central Committee introduce its first gender quota. In 1967 it passed Resolution 153 calling for formal gender quotas for people's assemblies and jobs across all industries at levels of 35% or higher. In the wartime context, expectations of women were redefined with the VCP quickly accepting their increasing role in the family, labor force, and political party (Tétreault, 1996: 43). During this critical period, women's share of people's assembly members at commune, district, provincial, and national levels promptly jumped from 17, 21, 23 and 14% respectively in 1965 to 41, 40, 35, and 31% by 1972 (Goodkind, 1995: 346; Turley, 1972). In Turley's (1972: 796) assessment, the VCP's adoption of a *de facto* 18% party-level reserved seat quota was 'motivated by a genuine ideological imperative to improve the position of women' and a 'pragmatic realization that women constituted a latent social force which, if mobilized behind the revolution, could swing the balance of forces decisively in its favor.'

While the war had 'swept women into positions of local power and authority,' men returned to many of these positions after the war and gender inequality accelerated after the VCP's 1986 adoption of *đổi mới* (renovation) shifted attention towards economic growth and market forces (Fahey, 1998; Goodkind, 1995: 342). At this point the VCP de-prioritized social development, conducted massive public-sector downsizing whereby 'roughly 70 per cent of redundant workers were female', reduced paid maternity leave from six to four months, and women sank to 18% of VNA members (Vo, 2008: 233).

These losses sparked the emergence of a second critical period from about 1993 to 1995 as gender equality was brought back onto the Vietnamese political agenda and a second gender quota was adopted. Sensing a potential crisis as many communist regimes collapsed during the early 1990s (and aiming to curtail the increasing erosion of women's status and political influence), the VCP Politburo adopted Resolution 04-ND/TW in July 1993 which called for increasing numbers of women in positions of authority in all sectors within party committees and the government and for increased emphasis on women's role in the process of renovation to upgrade women's material and spiritual life (ADB, 2002; Fahey, 1998; Vo, 2008). That year, a National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) was established to enhance women's role in nation-building and in 1994 the VCP Central Committee issued Directive 37 mandating that women should fill at least 20% of elected positions at all levels of the party and government (Vo, 2008: 232). The following year the NCFAW represented Vietnam in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action which gave global momentum to gender quotas as a means to increase the share of women in political decision-making bodies.

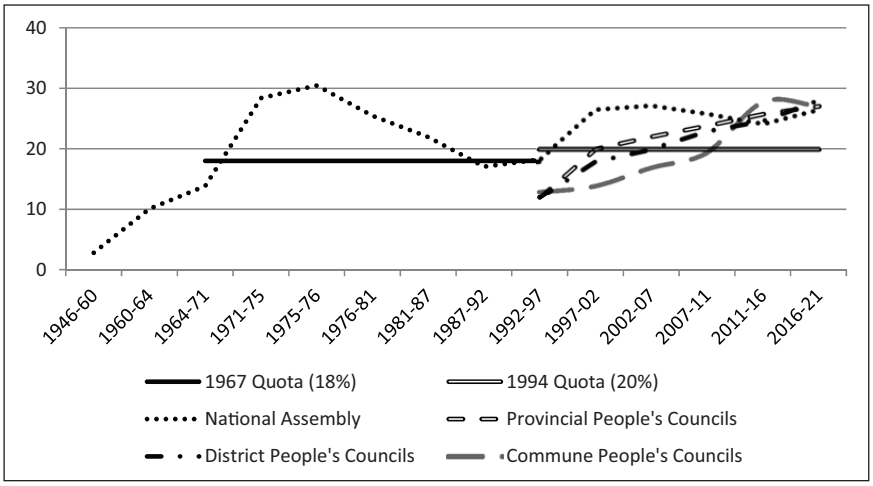
After this critical period, women's political representation significantly improved. First, women shot up from 18% to 26% of assembly members at the next VNA election in 1997. Second, Vietnam adopted multiple action plans starting with a National Plan of Action for Advancement of Women (NPAAW) for 2000 followed by a second NPAAW for 2001–2010. Vietnam also increased cooperation with United Nations (UN) agencies on gender targets embedded in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Vietnam Development Goals. Higher aspirational targets were then subsequently declared following Vietnam's 2006 Law on Gender Equality. For instance, a 2007 VCP Politburo Resolution 11-NQ/TW on 'Work for Women in the Period of Accelerating Industrialization and Modernization' and a third NPAAW for 2011–2020 proposed increasing females in the VNA and people's councils to between 35 and 40% by 2020 and for women's leadership to reach 25% on all party committees and 30% on government bodies by 2020 (Munro, 2012; Vandenbeld and Ly, 2012; World Bank, 2011).

While consistently aiming higher, not all initiatives to increase gender quota thresholds have proven successful. For instance, a proposed 30% VNA quota for women was not inserted into the 2006 Law on Gender Equality (Truong, 2008). As a result, gender equality advocates may remain sceptical about unmet targets and non-adopted proposals, but we believe the presence of a pro-quota discourse and active debates over ratcheting up targets proposed by actors within the party and government indicate that quota implementation is taken seriously. Most importantly they indicate that minimal standards for inclusion set by the 1967 and 1994 quotas have become rather firmly entrenched such that we are unlikely to see women's representation drop below that quota level. For instance, the recent 2015 Law on Election of Deputies to the National Assembly and People's Councils stipulates that women should comprise at least 35% of candidates nominated to stand in the VNA and people's council elections and in the 2016 VNA election 39% of the candidates were women (UN Women, 2016).

Data analysis

In our view, a *symbolic co-option* pattern of incorporation took place after Vietnam's first 1967 gender quota followed by a transition towards *delayed integration* after its second 1994 gender

Figure 2. Female deputies share (%) of the Vietnamese National Assembly and people's councils.



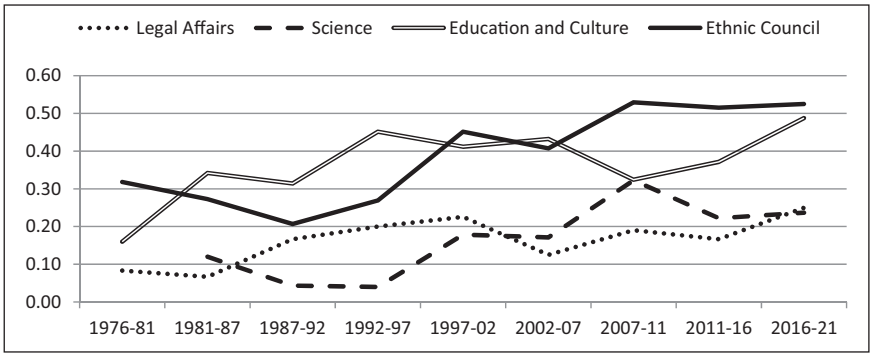
Sources: Authors' dataset; ADB (2002); Munro (2012); UN Women (2016); Vandenbeld and Ly (2012).

quota was adopted. Women's status, capabilities, and positions in the VNA have been upgraded and this transformation is observable in FMPs' *presence, voice, experience*, and *training*.

Starting with *presence*, as illustrated in Figure 2, FMPs increased to slightly over 30% of the VNA after the VCP's 1967 wartime gender quota but later dropped down to 18% after the 1986 *đổi mới* reforms. By contrast, after the VCP's second quota, women have consistently comprised over 24% of VNA members from 1997 to the present. The number of VNA seats also expanded, resulting in FMPs averaging 127 per assembly after the second quota compared to 97 during the first quota. During the current term (2016–2021) women comprise 27% of national assembly, provincial (*tỉnh*) and communal (*xã*) people's council members and 28% of district (*huyện*) assembly members (UN Women 2016: 121). These achievements are considerably above the VCP's 20% quota established in 1994 and slightly above a 25% target set in 2010. Although the rate of electoral success for male candidates (69%) in the 2016 VNA elections was still higher than for women (40%), women's share of total candidates (39%) was much higher than in 2011 (31%). Another significant change is that whereas FMPs' share of locally-nominated MPs consistently ranged between 26–29% from 1997 to 2017, FMPs' share of centrally-nominated MPs more than doubled from 10.5% in 1997 (10th session) to 24.1% in 2017 (14th session) revealing that the more powerful party center is now nominating substantially more FMPs than in the past.

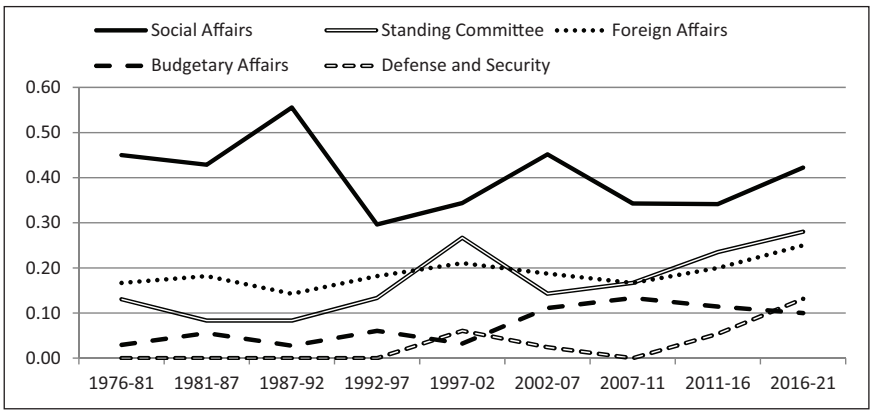
Voice is another essential element of integration that requires women's presence and leadership on parliamentary committees. As Mezey (1979: 135) has emphasized, 'a great deal of deliberative activity takes place in committee arenas of minimal legislatures. For one thing, committees meet more regularly than the legislature does.' In the case of Vietnam, the most powerful committee is the Standing Committee (SC) which meets all year round and serves as the institution's overarching leadership body. Women averaged only one SC member during the 1st quota period but averaged over three after 1994. Overall, between 1976 and 2017, women increased from 8% to 28% of SC members and increased from a negligible presence on specialized committees overseeing the budget (from 3% to 10%), national defense (from 0% to 13%), and legal affairs (from 8% to 25%) while steadily increasing their presence on committees dealing with education and culture (from 16% to 49%), foreign affairs (from 17% to 25%), science and technology (from 12% to 24%) and ethnic affairs (from 32% to 53%) and maintaining a relatively high share on the social affairs committee which oversees gender issues (from 45% to 42%) as shown in Figures 3 and 4.[4]

Figure 3. Women's share (%) of Vietnamese National Assembly legal affairs, science, education, and ethnicity committees from 6th to 14th Assemblies.



Source: Authors' dataset.

Figure 4. Women's share (%) of Vietnamese National Assembly standing, foreign affairs, budget, social affairs, and defense committees from 6th to 14th assemblies.

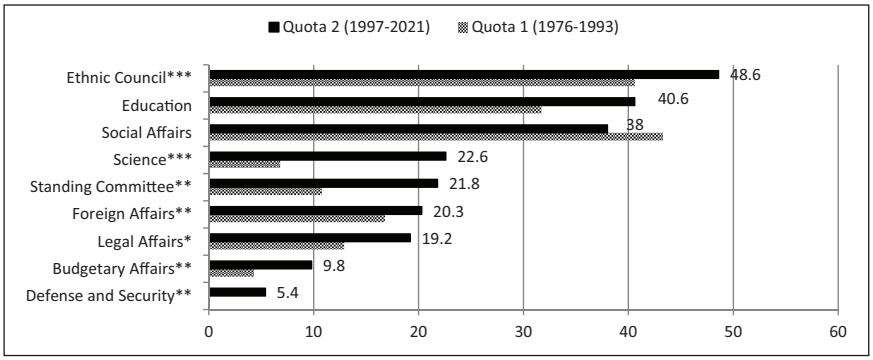


Source: Authors' dataset.

As Figure 5 demonstrates, for seven out of nine VNA committees there has been a statistically significant increase in women's membership between the first and second quota periods. This includes all committees present during both periods except the 'education' and 'social affairs' committees which already had strong inclusion of women during the first quota period. Women's presence on parliamentary committees is now above 'token' level (i.e. above 15%) on all but two VNA committees, a substantial gain considering that women comprise only about one-fourth of VNA members and many MPs in Vietnam are not members of any parliamentary committee.

Less impressive has been women's share of committee chairpersons and deputy chairpersons which rose from 9.5% during the first quota to 13.5% under the second quota. Comparatively speaking, however, more women have become leaders (chairs and vice-chairs) in provincial (30%), district (24%), and commune (15%) 'people's councils' with the provincial council figure indicating a critical mass (30%) of women in a crucial feeder body to the VNA, although most of these women were only vice-chairs (Vandenbeld and Ly, 2012: 13). From a longer-term perspective, within the VNA female chairpersons and deputy committee chairs have increased from 0% in the 1970s to 13% at present, but women have usually assumed the vice-chair

Figure 5. Women's membership (%) of VNA committees in two quota periods.



Note: Statistical significance via a two-sample unequal variance one-tailed *t*-test: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.
Source: Authors' dataset. First quota data availability covers 1976 through the 9th assembly elected in 1992.

position. For instance, during the current 14th assembly women are deputy chairs of the ethnic council, standing, law, education, and social affairs committees, but only chair the social affairs and standing committees. While this may be due to 'disproportionately fewer women being nominated by central institutions' (Schuler, 2014: 2),[5] these findings mirror those of O'Brien and Rickne (2016: 124) who found that quotas 'cannot wholly remedy women's exclusion from the most important political posts.'

As for *experience* and *training*, we take similar levels of parliamentary experience, life experience, and educational training between FMPs and MMPs to be signs of integration. Regarding parliamentary experience (incumbency) the trend for males and females has been in opposite directions. From the pre-quota period to the first and second quotas, incumbents as a share of MMPs dropped on average from 43.0 to 39.9 to 33.5% while incumbent FMPs rose from 21.4 to 27.9 to 27.4%. Moreover, after the 2nd quota was introduced in 1994, female incumbents rose from 18.1% in 1992 to 32.3% in 2017 whereas male incumbents were 27.2% in 1992 and 36.8% in 2017. This represents a narrowing of the gender gap from nine to five percentage points.

In terms of life experience, from 1946 to 1993 over three-fifths of FMPs (over 60%) were under age 40 and close to one-fourth were under age 30 during the first quota compared to only 3% of men. However, over the second quota period more than 90% of FMPs were over age 30 and more than two-thirds over age 40. The fact that the ages of FMPs are converging with MMPs reveals a preference for relatively older, more experienced women compared to the more youthful FMPs of the past. However, FMPs continue to face age discrimination due to the VCP's higher mandatory retirement age for men (60 years old) than women (55 years old) (Munro, 2012: 15). The net impact over the last four assemblies has been that considerably more MMPs (10%) than FMPs (2%) were over age 60 which may significantly impact eligibility for top leadership posts. For example, the VNA's historically first Chairwoman, Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Kim Ngân was appointed in 2016 at the age of 62.

As for education, data are unavailable for the first quota period, but since the second quota was adopted (1997–present), a nearly identical proportion of MPs have university degrees among ethnic-majority Kinh FMPs (74.2%) and MMPs (75.1%) and for non-Kinh FMPs (50.7%) and MMPs (45.8%). Areas of educational specialization are also nearly indistinguishable as FMPs' and MMP's most common first majors (Bachelor's degrees) are in social science (25.8%, 23.9%) followed by law (16.4%, 20.2%), and the natural sciences (15.8%, 14.6%). We interpret these trends concerning increasing similarity among MMPs' and FMPs' education, incumbency, and age as indicative of increasing integration.

Table 1. Vietnamese National Assembly member characteristics across three quota regimes.

	Pre-quota: 1946–1966		Quota 1: 1971–1993		Quota 2: 1997–2021	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Member of parliament (MP) numbers in the assembly	405	40	316***	**97****	361**	127***
	Percentages		Percentages		Percentages	
MP ratios	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
MPs (% of total)	88.0	12.0	76.4**	**23.6****	74.0	26.0
Incumbents (% of MPs)	43.0	21.4	39.9	**27.9**	33.5	27.4
MP life experience						
Over age 30	87.7	67.4	96.9	76.5	99.5	**91.8****
Over age 40	73.0	38.2	81.4**	39.5	94.5***	**67.2*****
MP educational training						
University (Kinh)					75.1	**74.2**
University (non-Kinh)					45.8	**50.7**
Law degree					20.2	**16.4**
Natural science degree					14.6	**15.8**
Social science degree					23.9	**25.8**

Notes: For MP ratios and life experience asterisks mark statistical significance via a two-sample (unequal variance) one-tailed *t*-test for each gender compared to the previous quota period. For educational training men and women are compared via a two-tailed *t*-test in the same quota period: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.
Source: Authors' dataset.

Analyzing substantive representation is rather difficult due to institutional non-transparency concerning roll-call votes and statements made during committee meetings, but a recent study of VNA plenary speeches observed that over 30% of FMP speeches referred to 'women, a woman's issue, or children's issues' compared to about 20% for men (Schuler, 2014: 3). During the 12th and 13th VNA sessions, women spoke out on domestic violence (6.5%) at more than four times the rate of men (1.4%) while in 2013 FMPs (14.8%) discussed maternity leaves during Labor Law debates three times more often than men (4.5%). More women have also spoken up against unequal land ownership and the earlier official retirement age for women than men (Schuler, 2014: 27–29). If women were simply co-opted we would expect their advocacy on these issues to be on par with MMPs, but in fact FMPs are more vocal than men on issues directly impacting women.

As displayed in Table 1, during Quota 1 the average share of women in parliament (24%) doubled compared to the pre-quota period (12%) and FMP incumbents increased from 21% to 28% but most FMPs were still young and few served on a parliamentary committee or leadership position. We take this as indicative of *symbolic co-option*. However, under Quota 2 we see a shift towards a pattern of *delayed integration*. Average FMP numbers in the VNA increased to an average of 127 (from 97 during the previous quota) and women consistently held 24–27% of assembly seats. In fact, by enlarging the number of assembly seats from 395 in 1992 to 450 in 1997 and later 498 in 2002, more representational space was created which has boosted female delegate numbers. Comparing the two quota periods, for each additional (new) 75 seats, on average 45 went to men and 30 to women.

Meanwhile incumbency of FMPs and MMPs has been converging as has their ages and university training. Under the second quota we observed a statistically significant rise in FMPs' ages, but there were no statistically significant differences across men and women in terms of having a

Table 2. Three phases of parliamentary gender quotas in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Phase	Pre-quota	Quota 1	Quota 2
Critical period	Founding of regime	American War	Reaction to *đổi mới*
Quota effect		**Symbolic co-option**	**Delayed integration**
Historical context	1946 Constitution establishes principle of Gender Equality in Article 9 which would serve as a basis for legitimating future gender quota actions	1st gender quota launched by the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) in 1967 established a *de facto* 18% minimum for women in the Vietnamese National Assembly (VNA). Female MPs peaked at 31% in 1975 and then declined after the war to a low of 18% in 1987 as the adoption of *đổi mới* (economic reforms) in 1986 shifted priorities away from equality towards economic growth. This quota also set in motion momentum towards a 2nd quota	2nd gender quota of minimum 20% women in VNA and sub-national people's assemblies launched by VCP in 1993/94 by VCP Politburo and Central Committee in tandem with goals later set at 1995 Beijing conference. This quota has been accompanied by increasingly higher goals and targets over time for women candidates to the VNA and other political bodies including a 35% candidate quota in 2015

university education or degrees in law, natural science, or social science. FMPs have also become more significant contributors to parliamentary committees and plenary discussions on women's issues and are more likely to hold leadership positions than in the past even if most chairpersons are still male.

To sum up, as shown in Table 2, gender quotas for the VNA have essentially evolved over three phases. Initially women had a small presence, but experienced considerable gains in the 1970s after a gender quota was adopted in 1967 inaugurating a *symbolic co-option* pattern of incorporation. Subsequently, women have experienced gains not only in numbers but also in influence since the late 1990s after a second quota was adopted in 1994 initiating a pattern of *delayed integration*.

Conclusion

This article has examined long-term consequences of parliamentary gender quotas in a single-party system. Its historical analysis exposed critical periods impacting quota development with data analysis comparing female and male MP characteristics including leadership positions and committee assignments under different quota regimes. As discussed above, nearly five decades after adopting its first gender quota, under Vietnam's second gender quota the pattern of incorporation now looks more like *delayed integration* than the *symbolic co-option* scenario observed under its first quota. In this evolving process, quotas have served as a minimum floor for women's involvement and a partial check on patriarchy. Furthermore, while women are often strong in numbers only when an institution is weak, women's numbers and influence in the VNA have increased while the institution has become stronger.

These findings support recent international trends identified by Paxton and Hughes (2015: 333, 334) that 'women's inclusion in politics was historically perceived as problematic but is now seen as not only acceptable, but desirable' and that countries have 'modified existing quotas to ratchet up the threshold over time.' However, in Vietnam this ratcheting up effect has taken place across

the board regarding both assembly seats *and* candidates, the ruling party *and* the government, and at national *and* local levels of politics. Compared to a past of relative exclusion prior to introducing its first gender quota in 1967 we now see (especially after a second quota was adopted in 1994) a slow, gradual, and incremental rise of women in areas of influence within the national assembly and a concomitant rise in their professionalization (as indicated by age, incumbency, and education). Thus, we see evidence of incremental advances over time under a party-level gender quota reminiscent of the 'incremental-track' advances in Scandinavia (Dahlerup, 2006; Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005).

It is only at the top level of leadership that women have been mostly excluded, although a few women have been appointed committee chairs as in the VNA's current standing committee. In this respect, the VNA and VCP leadership consists of a self-reinforcing cycle of males picking males as in most countries, but presumably things would be much worse if there were no gender quotas. As Pierson (2004: 90) has noted, 'major changes in elite composition will often operate through slow-moving processes of replacement' that 'may take decades to work itself out.' However, with the growth of global norms supporting women's participation in politics following the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and increasing levels of women's education and career advances over the past few decades we argue that arrangements to bring women in as junior partners may in some instances evolve over time such that women's status (and influence) within an assembly continues to rise due to changing gender norms or increased pressure from international funders or gender advocates. In this respect, gender quotas can help to lock-in previously achieved gains especially in political cultures amenable to quotas for significant population groups, and also perhaps in nations seeking to improve their international reputation and status.

Concerning the latter, the case of Vietnam also suggests that external shocks may be necessary for adopting more stringent quotas and moving towards delayed integration in authoritarian regimes. For instance, Vietnam adopted its first gender quota in response to the American War and manpower shortages in the 1960s and its second gender quota in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union changed the basis of the regime's legitimacy and need to maximize national talent in governance. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action calling for worldwide gender quotas as reiterated in the 2000–2015 MDGs and 2015–2030 Sustainable Development Goals has also certainly helped to propel further quota developments in Vietnam over the past two decades.

While the advances in women's representation documented here have been considerable, women and men clearly still do not have equal numbers, power, or influence within the national assembly. Women are still less likely than men to be full-time members of the VNA or members of the most powerful committees although they have been increasing their shares over time. Remaining obstacles to achieving gender equality include not only gendered differences in career patterns and low numbers of women candidates nominated at the central level (Schuler, 2014), but also: the position of names and candidate information on the ballot; a short campaign season of only two to four weeks; women deterred from serving as MPs due to the 'triple workload' (of domestic and caregiving work, career and politics); and 'proxy voting' whereby a 'member of the family – usually a man – will go and cast votes for the whole family' (Vandenbeld and Ly, 2012: 18).

Building on this study, we believe it will be useful for future research to incorporate additional analysis drawing on MP interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, as well as analysis of parliamentary speeches and behavior (to the extent permissible). It will also be useful to conduct similar longitudinal analysis on gender quotas in other single-party states. For example, thus far gender quotas in the one-party dominant systems of Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda have received considerably more attention in the literature than one-party systems ruled by communist parties (i.e. Cuba, China, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam). By taking our analysis back to the 1960s, Vietnam also provides us with a study of the long-term impacts of gender quotas

emerging from mid-conflict and post-conflict settings. This may be of relevance to other countries in Asia which have instituted parliamentary gender quotas during or after the cessation of violent conflict (i.e. Afghanistan, China, Iraq, Nepal, North Korea, and Timor-Leste). In conclusion, only by extending this research will we be able to identify whether the delayed integration pattern spotted in Vietnam is an outlier or representative of a broader trend.

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Notes

1. For instance, a related shift occurred in Tanzania whereby women's recruitment into reserved seats was once 'entirely in the hands of the national executive of Chama Cha Mapinduzi' but later 'entirely delegated to the Union of Tanzanian Women' (Bjarnegård and Zetterberg, 2016: 477).
2. The Viet Nam Women's Union is 'a loyal opposition within the political bureaucracy that attempts to safeguard and promote women's interests while remaining staunchly behind other aspects of party policy' (Goodkind, 1995: 343).
3. Most self-nominees do not make the final ballot and very few have been elected (Malesky and Schuler, 2013).
4. Committee membership data prior to 1976 were not available.
5. The Vietnamese National Assembly (VNA)'s central leadership is chosen beforehand by Vietnamese Communist Party elites rather than by VNA deputies who only confirm these selections later.

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