

Part I

GENDER POLITICS IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

WOMEN'S TOP-LEVEL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Failures and Hopes of Ukrainian Gender Politics

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More than twenty years of Ukrainian independence passed before women's representation in *Verkhovna Rada* (Ukrainian Parliament) rose to 10 percent (in 2012). As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states in their Ukrainian records, however: "No women currently serve as oblast [regional] governors, only one woman was recently appointed to the governmental ruling body, and few were recruited as candidates in the last election. It was only as late as February 14, 2012 that one female was appointed Minister of Health (and Vice-Prime Minister)—Raisa Bohatyriova—Party of Regions. In short, Ukraine's record on women's inclusion in mainstream politics is abysmal."¹ At the same time, the State Committee of Statistics of Ukraine shows that women make up 64 percent of the management cadres of all civil servants,² yet most serve at the local level. Gender discrimination against women's access to political power at the upper levels is reducible to the following: the greater the power, the fewer the women.

Ukraine was among the first of the former Soviet republics to implement gender equality legislation. It had (and continues to have) a number of international gender equality projects that are financed by the UNDP, EU, Swedish Institute of Development (SIDA), etc. The country boasts the most famous female politician in the world (especially after the Orange Revolution)—Yulia Tymoshenko—who might have served as an excellent role model for Ukrainian women had she not disavowed feminism. What are the main barriers that have limited the position of women at or near the top of the political pyramid? This chapter will consider both the negative

and positive trends in recent years (2010–2012).

Various levels of analyses will be employed to provide some insights into the reasons for the current political situation. They include: the results of international reports and Ukraine's obligations concerning gender equality implementation; gender politics in Ukraine during the previous decade affecting female empowerment; a discussion of the most popular political party, and the position of its leadership on questions of women's empowerment; results of sociological polls on women's political participation; women's NGOs and grassroots initiatives to translate their empowerment into a viable political agenda; and the controversy surrounding implementation of gender party quotas as an expedient designed to reverse female parliamentary underrepresentation. Both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as empirical data will comprise the methodological approach.

Primary quantitative data analysis is based on public-opinion surveys ("Opinions and Attitudes of the Ukrainian Population," 1999, 2007, 2008, 2010)³ provided by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology.⁴ Secondary quantitative data analysis draws on recent reports such as the Global Gender Gap Report 2011 and UNDP Human Development Report 2011, and the Women in National Parliaments and Women in Politics databases, collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Findings also include an evaluation of the progress to date toward fulfillment of Ukraine's Millennium Development Goals. In addition, a discussion of affirmative action will take into account projects such as "Quotas: A Key to Equality?"⁵ and the Global Database of Quotas for Women,⁶ compiled by a research team from the Political Science Department at Stockholm University.⁷ In-depth interviews conducted in Ukraine in 2011⁸ by experts with ten or more years experience in Ukrainian gender politics implementation, and my own participation in various public initiatives since 2004, round out the body of this research.

Gender in Reports: International Level

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2011, provided by the World Economic Forum (Hausman, Tyson, and Zahidi 2012: 338), Ukraine places 64th among 135 countries in the world measuring gender-based gaps in four fundamental categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Table 1.1. Ukraine in the Global Gender Gap Report 2011.

#	Subindex	Rank (among 135 countries)	Index Score (0.00 = inequality; 1.00 = equality)
1	Economic participation and opportunity	44	0.704
2	Educational attainment	24	1.000
3	Health and survival	56	0.976
4	Political empowerment	106	0.065
5	Total	64	0.686

Source: Hausman et al. 2011: 339.

The political empowerment subindex includes the male/female gap in political decision making at the highest levels; the ratio of women to men at the ministerial level and in parliamentary positions; and the ratio of women to men according to years spent in executive office—prime minister or president—during the past fifty years. It lacks the variables that capture the differences in government at the local levels, but its authors are cognizant of the problem and assure us that should such data become available for the global level they will be considered for inclusion in the Global Gender Gap Index (Hausman, Tyson, and Zahidi 2012: 4).

In other subindices, such as educational attainment and economic participation, Ukraine delivered much better scores. The nation's women are well educated and in general participate

dynamically in the labor market (primarily at the lower levels), yet they are virtually excluded from top political decision making here as well. In the Global Gender Gap Report 2011 political empowerment subindex, Ukraine is positioned behind a number of other post-Soviet countries such as Latvia (33rd), Lithuania (65th), the Kyrgyz Republic (68th), the Russian Federation (84th), Estonia (87th), Moldova (88th), etc.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) of the UNDP Human Development Report also focuses on women's participation in political decision making, highlighting the fact that women lag behind men everywhere. The UNDP Human Development Report for 2011 ranks Ukraine 76th out of 187 countries (UNDP 2011), yet it is considered a country with a high human developmental level.⁹ The GII ranking puts Ukraine in 57th place, with only 8 percent (currently 9.7 percent) of the seats in the National Parliament occupied by women (UNDP 2011: 140). Finally, when we search the Inter-Parliamentary Union database of Women in Parliaments,¹⁰ Ukraine takes 120th place (sharing it with Algeria) among 190 countries classified in descending order by percentage of women

Ukraine set out to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (UNDP 2012). The goals were adapted to the nation's values, taking into account the specifics of the country's augmented evolution. In particular, Goal 3 is connected to ensuring gender equality. There are two main targets here: gender equality in political life and gender equality in Ukraine's labor market.

According to the UNDP Millennium Development Goals for 2015, ratified by Ukraine, its parliament is under obligation to reach a target of at least 30 percent women (table 1.2). By 2007 the Ukrainian state planned to raise the women's presence in *Verkhovna Rada* to 13 percent (UNDP 2012), but this number fell far short of the country's international obligation of a 3.1

subgoal. Following the 2007 parliamentary elections *Verkhovna Rada* continued as an almost totally male-dominated body, consisting of only 8 percent women. Since independence Ukraine has shown little augmentation of this number, a clear indication that it will prove difficult to achieve the 30 percent objective in three years.

Table 1.2. Goal 3: “Promote Gender Equality” in UNDP Millennium Development Goals: Progress in Achievement

Target 3.A: Ensure gender representation at the level of no less than 37 percent in representative bodies and high-level executive authorities					3.1. Gender ratio among the members of the Parliament of Ukraine, number of women / number of men							
					3.2. Gender ratio among the members of local authorities, number of women / number of men							
					3.3. Gender ratio among the higher-level civil servants (one–two categories), number of women / number of men							
Target 3.B: Half the gap in incomes between women and men					3.4. Ratio of average wages between women and men, percent							
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2015
3.1	8/92	8/92	5/95	5/95	5/95	5/95	9/91	8/92	8/92	8/92	8/92	30/70
3.2	42/58	42/58	42/58	42/58	42/58	42/58	35/65	35/65	37/63	37/63	37/63	50/50
3.3	15/85	15/85	14/86	16/84	13/87	19/81	19/81	17/83	18/82	23/76	25/75	30/70
3.4	70.9	69.7	69.3	68.6	68.6	70.9	72.8	72.9	75.2	77.2	77.8	86

Source.¹¹

To sum up, according to the primary international reports on gender inequality throughout the world—the Global Gender Gap Report 2011, the Gender Inequality Index in the

UNDP Human Development Report 2011, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union database of Women in Parliament—Ukraine ranks very low in female empowerment and political participation compared to neighboring post-Soviet countries. Moreover, gender equality in Ukrainian politics has the worst value compared to other areas such as education, health, and the economy.

State Level: Gender Politics in Ukraine

The negative macro-picture of Ukrainian women's participation in top-level politics might be better explained by analyzing it at the state levels. During the past ten years some of the goals have been achieved. For example, *Verkhovna Rada* adopted the groundbreaking law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women” (Law no. 2866-IV) in September 2005, which came into effect on 1 January 2006. The government of Ukraine also ratified the decree “On Adoption of the State Program of Ensuring Gender Equality in Ukrainian Society for 2006–2010” (Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers no. 1834), and developed a subsequent one for 2011–2016. More than a decade ago Ukraine became the first post-Soviet country to introduce domestic violence legislation (“On Prevention of Domestic Violence”). In 2011 separate pieces of legislation on prevention of human trafficking (a critical gender-based problem) were adopted. De jure gender equality is supported by national institutional mechanisms and legislation. International and national NGOs monitor the results of state and regional programs and propose solutions for improvement.

One might persuasively argue that despite so many promising proposals, legislative attempts, and government programs, etc., not much has been realized. Without a doubt, there is a lack of governmental accountability for meeting its legislative initiatives. The all-important

Ukrainian legislation “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women” is a clear example of such ineffectiveness. Yet it is also significant that the law introduced such vital gender-sensitive terminology as equal rights and opportunities for women and men, gender equality, discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual harassment, etc. (Law no. 2866-IV, Article 1). Concrete bodies, institutions, and organizations are specified as those with the power to ensure equal rights and opportunities for both sexes. All of this is nothing more than a “tempest in a teapot,” however. Most articles are simply declarative, without any real mechanism for executing them (particularly the administrative or criminal codes), or sanctions for violating them. For example, according to Article 17, “employers are prohibited to offer jobs targeting specifically women or men in their advertisements.” But in the absence of any sanctions the Ukrainian labor market ads are full of such discriminatory descriptions.

In October 2010 the Ukrainian population was surveyed regarding its acquaintance with the law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women.”¹² Despite the fact that the law came into force back in 2006, 43 percent of the respondents had never heard of it; the same number had heard something, but only about 10 percent of the respondents were familiar with the contents.¹³ The answers of women and men did not differ significantly, leading to the conclusion that relatively few Ukrainians of either sex are familiar with any major gender legislation.

For some time the Ministry of Ukraine for Family, Youth, and Sports (Ministry for Social Policy at the time of this writing) was the main body responsible for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for both sexes. The title alone attests to the fact that perception of gender issues is limited. Under current economic and social conditions the entrenched stereotypes of men as breadwinners and leaders in the public sphere (particularly in politics), and of women as mothers

and wives, limit any real prospects for gender equality. In its effort to become gender specific Ukrainian legislation is still crafted with a view to protecting women, family, and children, thus perpetuating traditional gender roles, and what amounts to the infantilization of women.

The second largest problem regarding gender issues besetting Ukrainian society can be analyzed by the content of public speeches delivered by top authorities. Since 2010 sexist speeches by high-level politicians have received wide attention in Ukraine: “Ukrainian women berate ‘Neanderthal’ PM for sexist remarks.”¹⁴ Other sexist pronouncements by Mykola Azarov received extensive coverage as well: “Some say our government is too large; others that there are no women,” he observed. “There’s nothing to look at during cabinet sessions, nothing but boring faces. With due respect to women, however, conducting reforms is not women’s business.” Foreign newspapers like *The Guardian* reported the incident.

Azarov’s remarks made it plain that Ukrainian women are nothing more than “a beautiful commodity” to look at and to inspire politicians to great deeds. To add insult to injury, in his recent greetings to women on International Women’s Day on 8 March 2012, Azarov failed to offer Ukrainian woman any hope for positive change, or even to suggest the need for such practical benefits as state support for parents with children, for instance. Instead, he resorted to the well-worn wish for their “personal happiness” and “unfading beauty.”¹⁵

As for women as beautiful objects, the Ukrainian president has vigorously promoted the notion of objectified womanhood: “Welcome to Ukraine to see our beautiful girls” was the message sent to an international delegation that met in Davos in 2011.¹⁶ In an effort to improvise on the EURO 2012 promotion “Switch on Ukraine,” Yanukovich declared, “it is enough to see it with one’s own eyes, when the chestnut trees are in bloom as the weather grows warmer, in Ukrainian cities women start to take off their clothes. To see such beauty is an amazing thing!”

In the eyes of many men Ukrainian women have two roles to play: as objects of beauty (inspiration to men) and as mothers (reproducers of the nation). One woman—Yulia Tymoshenko—seemingly embodied both profiles in the role of a stylish woman and “mother of the nation” (especially during the Orange Revolution), but she never rose to the challenge of knowingly becoming the role model she might have been.

Political Parties

What can we expect of politics in Ukraine when the nation’s most famous female politician never exhibited any gender sensitivity? During the 2007 parliamentary elections, for example, the woman who came after her on the party list was in thirtieth place. Tymoshenko’s failure to address this could account, at least in some measure, for the failure of Ukrainian women’s organizations to make a show of solidarity during their International Women’s Day demonstrations on 8 March 2012 against her unjust imprisonment, or to mount a grassroots protest against her persecution and incarceration.

On 1 March 2012 the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) hosted a remarkable event in Kyiv, an open discussion on “Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties.” Arseny Yatseniuk (“Front of Change” party leader), Vitaliy Klychko (*Udar* party leader), Leonid Kozhara (Deputy Head, Party of Regions), Borys Tarasiuk (*Rukh* party leader), etc., all assembled to discuss women’s political empowerment.

In an effort to share their main proposals with male party leaders, NDI and UNDP presented a comprehensive manual on the development of political parties through the enthusiastic and effective engagement of women as activists, members, and voters. According to

these associations, internal party organizational strategies include: addressing gender equality in the party's legal framework; making a statement on gender equality in the founding document; and advocating for internal quotas that would ensure women's participation on governing boards (NDI 2011: 4). NDI also examines the benefits accruing to political parties when they involve women in their public activity. It notes, "findings from the case studies suggest that those political parties augmented their support base and gained electorally after adopting reforms to promote women's empowerment" (11). Spinoffs for political parties implementing reforms would be renewed public interest in their parties; increased flow of funding; an increase in new members, etc. (12).

Ukrainian political parties have their own specific attitudes toward involving women in politics, however, especially at the top level. These differences are visible in their party programs and lists. All the most popular Ukrainian parties (such as Our Ukraine, the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko, the Party of Regions, and so on) tend to be gender insensitive, and ignore important gender equality implementation measures in their programs (Plotian 2006; Melnyk, and Kobelianska 2006).

In 2010 members from the Ukrainian Women's Fund interviewed eight of sixteen political parties in *Verkhovna Rada* to determine the deputies' attitudes toward women in politics. Results proved contradictory. Political parties declared equal opportunities for women and men, and the absence of discriminatory policies, but as a rule made no special effort to engage more women. The latter's very low numbers at the top level are explained by competition among candidates themselves, with men proving to be more adept at securing the top positions (UWF 2010: 2). Although an analysis of the first five party lists demonstrated that in electoral campaigns parties declare their intent to follow the "at least one woman in the first fifth" rule,

female candidates never seem to rise to such positions.

In April 2010 three focus groups (in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Lutsk), with representatives of leading political parties in attendance,¹⁷ were conducted under the auspices of the project “Analysis and Recommendations for the Reform of Political Parties’ Legislation and Regulation in Ukraine” (Kovryzhenko 2010: 15).¹⁸ Once again, results confirmed that politicians are less than eager to support affirmative action that would raise the number of female representatives in mainstream politics. General sentiment indicated that “women’s participation in political life should be promoted indirectly, not through mandatory quotas” (84).

In his personal blog on “Ukrainian Pravda” the Deputy Head of the Party of Regions¹⁹ Leonid Kozhara²⁰ provided some allegedly gender-sensitive statistics that confirmed gender segregation. According to Kozhara, women constitute 53 percent of all registered Party of Regions members, yet only half, or 25.5 percent, are deputies at any level. There is no hierarchical specification, perhaps to avoid portraying an even bleaker picture. Women comprise a mere 30 percent of the Party of Region’s local boards, where so-called women’s issues are normally considered, disparities that Ukrainian parties vow to correct.

Public Opinion: Attitudes toward Women in Politics

Monitoring public opinion demonstrates that, contrary to the actions of political parties, Ukrainian society is becoming more egalitarian-oriented in its consideration of female participation in the political life of the country. This positive dynamic can be traced for the years 1999–2007 (table 1.3).

Table 1.3. “Most men are better suited for politics than most women” (percent)

	1999			2007		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Don’t agree / prefer to	19.5	18.2	20.4	34.7	29.6	39.0

disagree rather than agree						
Difficult to say	15.8	15.0	16.4	18.2	17.9	18.5
Prefer to agree rather than disagree / agree	62.5	65.3	60.4	45.3	50.9	40.8
No answer	2.2	1.5	2.7	1.7	1.7	1.7

Source: KIIS, February 1999 (n=1588), April 2007 (n=2009).

In 1999 nearly 63 percent of respondents (more than 65 percent men and nearly 61 percent women) were of the opinion that most men are better suited for politics than most women. Results of the same public opinion survey taken in 2007 demonstrate a visible change in attitudes. The number of respondents with patriarchal views decreased by almost 20 percent—from 63 percent to just over 45 percent of all respondents, but the growing difference between male and female views became more apparent, with 51 percent of men and 41 percent of women agreeing with the “most men are better suited for politics than most women” sentiment. Clearly, though, Ukrainian society still favors the male-breadwinner family model. Respondents of both sexes prefer to sustain the traditional division of public and private spheres—reinforcing the belief that women should make support of men’s careers a top priority.

Table 1.4. “For a wife it is more important to support the husband’s career than to pursue her own” (percent, 2010)

	Total	Men	Women
Don’t agree	17.7	12.8	21.7

Prefer to disagree rather than agree	17.1	13.2	20.2
Difficult to say	24.5	25.7	23.5
Prefer to agree rather than disagree	16.0	18.6	14.0
Agree	20.3	25.3	16.1
No answer	4.4	4.4	4.5

Source: KIIS, October 2010 (n=2038).

For all of the positive changes in public attitudes a persuasive argument is building that on the whole Ukrainian society continues to perceive women only as mothers and homemakers. Paradoxically, women might also hold a full-time position outside the home because so many families are unable to survive on a man's salary alone. Although traditional stereotypes still hold, Ukrainian society simply cannot afford many full-time homemakers. Of course, this is no indication of women's growing equality with men, either in jobs or in salaries. Clearly, gender discrimination remains endemic in the Ukrainian labor market as well.²¹ All such negative sentiments aside, however, recurring references to the low number of women in Ukraine's parliament do suggest that the majority of Ukrainians might be amenable to the idea of women in top political positions.

To summarize, almost 60 percent of all respondents replied that the number of women in Ukraine's parliament should equal at least one-third or more. Approximately one-fifth of the respondents were unable to supply an answer, while 10 percent of the men and 4 percent of the women indicated that the Ukrainian parliament should remain a male-dominated preserve.

Table 1.5. “How many female deputies should be in the Ukrainian Parliament?” (percent, 2010)

	Total	Men	Women
More than half	5.6	3.9	6.9
About half	30.5	23.0	36.5
One-third	19.8	19.2	20.2
One-fourth	10.7	13.3	8.6
One-tenth	6.6	8.8	4.8
None	6.7	10.0	4.0
Difficult to say / don't know	17.5	18.7	16.6
No answer	2.6	3.1	2.4

Source: KIIS, October 2010 (n=2038).

Public opinion on the presence of women in mainstream politics does appear contradictory, but it is also undeniable that for the past ten years views have become somewhat less patriarchal. Ukrainian society (women especially) supports (at least nominally) the idea that the Ukrainian parliament ought to comprise no less than 30 percent women, and the figure rises to 50 percent in some cases. Also, an argument can be made that in recent years at least a good portion of Ukrainian society has come to see a positive role model in the person of Yulia Tymoshenko, who has played such a constructive role in Ukrainian politics. At the same time, our data indicate that a segment of society seems unable to jettison the gender stereotyping of women as unsuitable for politics. This paradox remains to be worked out.

Women's Activism

A lack of female solidarity in both civil society and politics in Ukraine is consistent.

Notwithstanding the rising numbers of women who actively support gender parity, they are still in the minority. No women's movement worthy of the description *strong*, with a focus on feminism and the capacity to promote actively the idea of increasing women's participation in politics, exists in contemporary Ukraine. The country boasts hundreds of women's NGOs—local and national—but these tend to focus more on social issues such as women's health, childhood, and poverty than on equal rights and opportunities in the political sphere or the labor market. Examples include such organizations as the National Council of Ukrainian Women (1999), the Women's Union (*Zhinocha Hromada*), the Ukrainian Women's Association (*Soiuz Zhinok Ukrainy*), Women and Children of Ukraine, etc. Their visibility fell between 2010 and 2012, particularly in media coverage and attendance at community meetings on women's empowerment. This is yet another sign of the changing political climate after Yanukovich became president in 2010. A single exception is FEMEN, a group of radical grassroots activists demonstrating for women's rights, but the effectiveness of FEMEN's protest activity is a topic for a separate discussion.

An outstanding example of a pro equality individual activist is Kateryna Levchenko, former MP and current leader of an international antiviolence NGO that goes under the name La Strada-Ukraine. Her organization launched an attempt to sue Prime Minister Azarov for his sexist speech in 2010, although it proved unsuccessful.²²

Among the new grassroots organizations rejecting prevailing antiwomen cultural values we also find initiatives like "*Ofenzyva*" (Feminist Offensive),²³ which in 2011 introduced an

alternative model of celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March. It organized a women's art workshop, an international conference on feminism, and a march bearing the slogan "Church and State, the time has come for them to live apart." Its 200-person street protests, however, are hardly large enough to raise any genuine awareness of gender inequality. At the same time stronger public awareness, especially at the grassroots level, and in books and brochures, is manifest in the so-called antigender initiatives (like "STOP Gender"). They publish materials on gender politics, LGBT liberations (called gay-dictatorship), and children's rights (juvenile justice), calling attention to threats to family values. According to the Centre for Societal Research,²⁴ Ukrainian Protest and Coercion Data in Ukraine in 2010 and 2011, there were only twenty to twenty-three protests on the subject of women's rights (that is approximately 1 percent of all protests mounted). Almost all progender protests are executed by FEMEN, while a third are antigender protests (especially antiabortion demonstrations), which are on the rise and becoming increasingly strident.

Meanwhile, in late 2011 an "Equal Opportunities" caucus was formed in the Ukrainian Parliament.²⁵ It comprised twelve female and three male deputies from the pro-presidential and opposition factions and advocated gender equality in all spheres of life. The group was left with a large agenda after the 8 March 2012 holiday had passed. For instance, on 12 March Deputy Andrii Shkil introduced a bill on the prohibition of abortion. Under the existing law a woman can have an abortion only during the first trimester of her pregnancy. This bill and unresolved gender-based violence, especially rape, are subjects of increased attention,²⁶ constituting potential incentives for women's NGOs and activists to unite in a common protest against the use of women as objects of manipulation by a patriarchal society.

Yulia Tymoshenko: Controversial Female Empowerment Model

Yulia Tymoshenko is the most famous woman in Ukraine's mainstream politics: she heads the All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" party and Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko. Whatever her personal convictions, including her self-descriptor as a nonfeminist, she still represented a useful role model for women in Ukrainian politics as prime minister in 2005, and again in 2007–2010. During the Orange Revolutions she inspired a multitude of people and was proclaimed "The Orange Princess." According to the Ukrainian magazine *Focus*, "Lady Yu" placed first in the annual ranking of the most influential women in Ukraine between 2006 and 2010. In the presidential election of 2010 Tymoshenko lost to Victor Yanukovich by only 3.5 percent of the votes (45.4 percent vs. 48.95 percent), owing to questionable circumstances, although she did win the popular vote. All such achievements rendered her a positive role model whether or not she personally sought the label.

Yulia Tymoshenko has not offered any special evidence of gender sensitivity, and shows no particular concern for the problem of gender discrimination or issues such as gender-based violence, etc. Perhaps for this reason Ukrainian women's organizations failed to support her when she was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for her alleged abuse of office in brokering an unfavorable gas deal with Russia.

We might argue quite convincingly that in her role as a famous female politician Tymoshenko has generally supported the patriarchal stereotypes that characterize Ukrainian public opinion. She was also known as "a beautiful feminine object," and named by the *Huffington Post* "a world leader of style." In her defense, however, in *Mapping Difference: The Many Faces of Women in Contemporary Ukraine* (Rubchak 2011: 314) we can read: "In Ukraine, where the term gender is only beginning to gain acceptance, where feminism is anathema, Tymoshenko is aware that a public declaration of support for the feminist point of

view can be political suicide.”

What is to be Done? A Gender Quota Debate

In recent years a number of Ukrainian researchers have discussed the introduction of gender quotas by political parties (Oksamytna 2006; Melnyk and Kobelianska 2006; Martsenyuk 2007; Plotian 2006). Experts on gender issues support the idea of their implementation. In the words of the head of the Committee for European Integration Serhii Plotian: “Implementation of gender quotas is widely seen as leading to more equal representation of women and men in elective bodies” (2006: 34). Among his recommendations is that much-discussed party quota of thirty females in the candidate lists (34). In particular, he proposed changes to the laws “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women,” “On the Election of People’s Deputies of Ukraine,” and “On the Political Parties of Ukraine” by adding a phrase requiring the presence of at least 30 percent of *either* sex on the lists. All such recommendations aside, in 2006 party lists of eligible candidates for election to the Ukrainian parliament still showed that men appear four times more frequently than women (34).

The political sphere in Ukraine is highly corrupt. According to the Corruption Perception Index Report 2011 data (Transparency International 2011) Ukraine placed 152nd among 180 countries. Ukrainian politics are closely connected to business, and dominated by men. Unlike the men, women have less money and fewer social networks at their disposal, a situation that impedes their ability to break into mainstream politics. That said, it must also be emphasized that according to data from the International Centre for Policy Studies,²⁷ Ukraine has made approximately ten legislative attempts to introduce gender party quotas, four of them connected with gender quotas in political candidate lists (International Centre for Policy Studies 2007: 10).

Each of these attempts failed, however. Article 1 of the law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women,” discussed above, defines “positive actions” as “special temporary actions designed to overcome the imbalance between opportunities for women and men to implement equal rights given them by the Constitution and the Laws of Ukraine” (Law no. 2866-IV). Article 3 of the same law refers to affirmative action as the primary focus of state politics on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The main gender legislation of Ukraine refers only to general definitions and statements about positive actions but offers no concrete quotas for eliminating the gender imbalance. By contrast, on the international scene in recent years more than one hundred countries have adopted such quotas (Krook 2009: 304). Electoral quotas for women might be constitutional, legislative, or in the form of a political party allocation (International IDEA).

Such quotas are controversial instruments, with their pluses and minuses. They put the responsibility on individual parties for nominating women. As Drude Dahlerup (1998: 102) explains, the main advantage of the party quota system is that “it forces the nominating bodies, especially political parties, to engage women in an active recruitment process.” It is essential that voluntary party quotas be adopted by a number of parties simultaneously, however. Should only one party decide to participate, then “if the support of that party declines, the representation of women will also drop” (Tripp et al. 2006: 132–133). In such an eventuality, blaming women can serve the interests of the nominating party.

Gender quotas aim to augment female representation in particular state bodies, eventually bringing it to a level equal to the proportion of women in the general population. When women constitute approximately half of the population clearly their views should be presented at the highest state level—a “critical mass” issue. As Dahlerup also observed, 30 percent is a crucial

threshold for changing the political scene. This was one of the reasons why Ukraine signed on (in 2000) to the UNDP-sponsored Millennium Development Goals requiring that level of representation as a means of publicly conveying compliance with the objective of promoting gender equality and empowering women, but the signatories' intent to implement such equality objectives remains open to question.

In the KIIS-conducted poll the question was posed: "What is your attitude toward the introduction of gender quotas in order to increase women's representation in Parliament?" Results of public opinion surveys conducted in 2008 and 2010 demonstrate that Ukrainians tended to support the idea of implementing quotas. Approximately 47–51 percent of the population (depending on the particular year) appeared to favor the initiative. For example, the number of declared supporters in October 2010 totaled almost half the adult population (47.6 percent), exceeding opponents of the plan by more than double.

Table 1.6. Attitudes toward the Introduction of Gender Quotas for the Purpose of Raising the Female Representation in Parliament (percent)

	2010			2008		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Agree	47.6	39.9	53.8	51.3	41.4	59.4
Disagree	22.2	30.0	15.8	18.1	25.2	12.3
I do not have an opinion on this issue	16.9	17.5	16.3	17.8	19.5	16.5
Difficult to say / don't know	11.1	10.4	11.7	11.6	12.5	10.8

No answer	2.2	2.2	2.3	1.2	1.4	1.1

Source: KIIS, September 2008 (n=2036), October 2010 (n=2038).

Not surprisingly, women tended to be more quota-friendly than men. For example, 59 percent of the women compared to 42 percent of the men supported affirmative action policies in 2008. By the 2010 election year, men had become twice as likely to oppose quota implementation. More than a quarter of the total respondents ventured no opinion, offering answers like “difficult to say” or “don’t know” (28 percent in both 2010 and 2008). The fact that such a high percentage of the population had not formed an opinion on the subject is another issue. It might well reflect an absence of debates on gender equality and party quotas in the media and public discourse.

Supporters of different political parties also held divergent views. Respondents who supported Our Ukraine, the People’s Self-Defence Party, the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko, and the Party of Regions were studied in April 2007, prior to the parliamentary elections. As shown in table 1.7, adherents of the Our Ukraine Party (57 percent) and the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko (57.5 percent) tended to have a more positive attitude than supporters of the Party of Regions (40.7 percent).

Table 1.7 Attitudes of Respondents with Different Political Views toward Gender Party Quotas (percent, 2007)

	If we have now elections and you voted which party would you support?		
	Our	Bloc of Yulia	Party of

		Ukraine Party	Tymoshenko	Regions
There is a proposal to introduce gender quotas in order to increase the number of female deputies in the <i>Verkhovna Rada</i> . What is your opinion? Do you support the measure or not?	Agree	57.0	57.5	40.7
	Disagree	19.9	23.0	27.5
	I have no opinion	13.3	9.1	16.0
	Difficult to say / Don't know	5.9	6.6	11.7
	No answer	3.8	3.8	4.4

Source: KIIS, April 2007 (n=2009).

Approximately 28 percent of the Party of Regions membership offered no opinion, compared with 16 percent of the respondents supporting the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko, and 19 percent from the Our Ukraine Party.

Both Tamara Melnyk, gender equality adviser to Yury Pavlenko, minister of family, youth, and sports in the Yushchenko government, and the UN-led women's rights program Equal Opportunities and Women's Rights in Ukraine Program Coordinator Larysa Kobelianska endorsed the idea of affirmative action (2006: 8). They also remind us that when passing the law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women" the legislative body ignored a gender analysis of the structure of *Verkhovna Rada*, as well as the international mandate of implementing gender equality through affirmative action (8).

What can we expect from Ukraine's current situation? Is it possible that the introduction of quotas would reduce political corruption, or address the low level of women's grassroots activism, patriarchal gender stereotyping, and sexism in Ukrainian society? Ukraine's international obligations and the positive experience of other countries are among the reasons for considering them a potential route for Ukraine to follow in order to begin addressing the issues under discussion here. When all is said and done, however, whether or not this can happen under the current misogynistic Yanukovich regime continues to be an open question.²⁸

Conclusion

Our evidence indicates that Ukrainian women, well educated and actively involved in the labor market, are excluded from the decision-making process at the highest political levels. Vertical gender segregation in Ukrainian politics is rampant. Malfunctioning legislation on gender, and sexist speeches from high-level politicians exert a negative influence on governmental gender politics. Ukrainian party views on a female presence in their bodies are also contradictory. On the declarative level, lawmakers make a show of supporting gender equality, yet at the same time they are shown to be averse to implementing their own recommendations.

A press release from the "Equal Opportunities" parliamentary caucus states that members "plan to raise the issue of introducing voluntary quotas for women in the party election lists."²⁹ Political strategist Taras Berezovets argues that Ukrainian parties already have an undeclared agreement on a quota of 20 percent for the representation of women in each of the political forces, but even these are far from being met.³⁰ As observers point out, "quota talks" connect mostly to election campaigns, when political forces are courting women voters.

The Ukrainian parliamentary election in October 2012 was based upon a mixed electoral

model—50 percent from party lists and the remaining 50 percent from simple-majority constituencies—with a 5 percent candidacy threshold. This electoral system is considered by many to be one of the major negative factors influencing the low number of women elected (Matland 1998). Conventional wisdom has it that the majoritarian system tends to cut women's representation,³¹ whereas in contrast the proportional electoral rule (PR) favors the election of more women. According to a National Democratic Institute analysis of future elections the current mixed voting electoral system will produce only twenty-eight women (6.2 percent) in the Ukrainian parliament.³² Volunteer party quotas could be helpful in raising this percentage. As gatekeepers, political parties are in a position to influence the level of women's political participation via affirmative action, should they manifest the political will to do so.

At the same time, it is important to remember that time is a vital resource for active participation in political life. Gender scholars (Bryson and Lister 1994; Bryson 2007) argue that women's "double burden" results in a decrease in the amount of time available for their political participation. In her book *Gender and Politics of Time* Valerie Bryson underscores the idea that shared domestic responsibilities is a key issue for implementing equality between the sexes (2007). Domestic work, assigned to the "female" sphere of activity, when added to full-time involvement in the labor market, leaves women with a much-reduced time horizon for politics. This is a crucial issue for Ukrainian society—on both the state and family levels. Emancipating women from domestic drudgery and care giving would require active involvement from men. It is incumbent upon the Ukrainian state to confront this head-on as yet another challenge for nondiscriminatory gender politics.

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Notes

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1. News as of 5 March 2012: <http://www.undp.org.ua/en/media/41-democratic-governance/1286-empowering-women-for-stronger-political-parties>.
 2. *Statistical data on civil servants and officials of self-governmental bodies (as of 31 December 2008)*. Main Department of Civil Service of Ukraine,
http://www.guds.gov.ua/control/en/publish/article?art_id=167381&cat_id=39077.
 3. February 1999 (n=1588), April 2007 (n=2009), September 2008 (n=2036), October 2010 (n=2038).

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4. Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) is one of the leading research institutions in Ukraine. <http://www.kiis.com.ua>.
 5. <http://www.statsvet.su.se/quotas/>.
 6. For comprehensive information about the project, see Global Database of Quotas for Women, A Joint Project of International IDEA and Stockholm University, <http://www.quotaproject.org/>.
 7. For further details about the project see Research at the Department of Political Science, The Quotas Project, <http://www.statsvet.su.se/quotas/>.
 8. Full results of these interviews can be found in the report:
http://gender.undp.org.ua/images/lib/gender_portret_kryma_ukr.pdf.
 9. Among others are the forty-seven countries at a very high human developmental level, and those at medium and low human developmental levels. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/>.
 10. The situation as of 31 December 2011, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.
 11. Ukraine: Progress toward Millennium Development Goals. Fact sheet 2011.
<http://www.undp.org.ua/en/millennium-development-goals/mdgs-in-ukraine>.
 12. KIIS database (n=2038); my analysis.
 13. One might argue that in general Ukrainians have a low level of acquaintance with legislation, that they do not trust the rule of law.
 14. See the full article at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/24/ukraine-mykola-azarov-women>.
 15. Full text of the greeting is available at
<http://www.partyofregions.org.ua/ru/news/politinform/show/9208>.
 16. More information can be found on the Ukraine Watch blog,
<http://ukrainewatch.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/yanukovych-invites-to-ukraine-for-sex-tourism/>.

17. Such as “Our Ukraine,” the Ukrainian People’s Party, the political “Civic Party Pora,” the Communist Party of Ukraine, the party “Reforms and Order,” All-Ukrainian Association “Motherland,” the Party of Regions, and the People’s Party.

18. Funded by the European Union and implemented in Ukraine by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The result is *Regulation of Political Parties in Ukraine: The Current State and Direction of Reforms*, a comprehensive report that thoroughly analyzes the particular problems and issues in Ukraine’s legislative and regulatory framework for political parties.

19. Main political power in today’s Ukraine.

20. See text in Ukrainian at <http://blogs.pravda.com.ua/authors/kozhara/4f4f74fcb7d1d/>.

21. The EU project “Gender Equality in the World of Work” (2009–2011) implemented by the International Labor Organization, was dedicated to this problem. <http://gender.ilo.org.ua>.

22. More information is available from Kateryna Levchenko’s column in *Ukrainska Pravda*: <http://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2010/04/1/4904154/>. An interview in September 2011 revealed that the courts found no evidence of discrimination. Azarov’s pronouncement was ruled a personal judgment. This led to an appeal in the international courts that remains to be resolved.

23. It is an independent public feminist initiative that fights to overcome patriarchal forms of power in its various manifestations (sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, racism, and chauvinism) and stands for economic and reproductive rights for women. It wants to change discriminatory social and legislative practices, to create space for critical gender studies and independent political activism, to develop and share emancipatory feminist knowledge and nonsexist language. <http://ofenzyva.wordpress.com>.

24. Centre for Society Research was created to carry out a study of social problems and

collective protests in Ukraine. <http://cedos.org.ua>.

25. More information can be found at <http://www.undp.org.ua/en/media/41-democratic-governance/1238-equal-opportunities-caucus-formed-in-the-ukrainian-parliament>.

26. The Oksana Makar case is a particularly virulent example of an egregious miscarriage of justice in Ukraine.

27. The International Centre for Policy Studies is an independent research organization whose function is to promote the concept of public policy and related processes as a guarantee of effective democracy in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries. <http://www.icps.kiev.ua/eng/>.

28. By the time this chapter had been submitted the Euromaidan Revolution had successfully deposed Yanukovich as president and he fled from Ukraine. Revolutionary events followed at an accelerated pace, as did Russia's illegal involvement in Ukraine's internal affairs. They continue to unfold, but the "woman question" was yet again put on hold.

29. The press release of "Cross-faction Group on 'equal opportunities'" is formulated by the *Verkhovna Rada*, 6 December 2011.

30. See text in Ukrainian at <http://ukrainian.voanews.com/content/women-president-in-ua-2012-03-09-142080573/918840.html>.

31. The electorate votes for a party, and the winning party and the winning party forms a government.

32. See text in Ukrainian at

http://portal.rada.gov.ua/rada/control/uk/publish/article/news_left?art_id=285306&cat_id=37486

Women's representation in the Ukrainian parliament in 2012 remained the same—just under 10 percent.