

Gender Quotas and Women's Increasing Political Competitiveness

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Abstract

Taiwan is a leader and exception in Asia concerning political representation by women, with women being 38 percent of its parliament's members. Previous studies attributed such a high percentage of women in politics to Taiwan's early and comprehensive adoption of gender quotas, applied to both local and national elections. The increase of the number of women in parliament came from an unlikely source, however: single member districts (SMDs), which have no applied quotas and are widely regarded as unfavorable for female candidates. Based on Taiwan's election data since the early 2000s, this essay explores the relationship between gender quotas and the increasing competitiveness of female politicians. The essay illustrates two major findings: (1) quotas for party lists have had little effect on motivating women in the proportional representation (PR) tier to run in SMDs, and (2) most of the women elected in SMDs, including parliamentary members and mayors, have chosen to run in districts with reserved seats when entering politics. The effect of gender quotas on motivating women to participate in politics under the single non-transferrable vote (SNTV) electoral system, used for national elections until 2008 and still used for Taiwan's local elections, is again confirmed, but from a different angle.

Keywords: Gender quotas, mixed member electoral system, reserved seats, SNTV, women's political participation.

In Taiwan's local elections held in November 2018, seven of the twenty-two newly elected city and county mayors were women. The percentage of females among all mayors reached 30 percent, a new milestone for Taiwanese women. Before this election, female mayors had never exceeded 12 percent and for years had remained under 10 percent.¹

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¹ This number was calculated by the author based on data from Taiwan's Central Election Commission database, <http://db.cec.gov.tw/histMain.jsp?voteSel=20181101C1> (accessed November 30, 2018).

The increase in the number of female mayors is part of an ongoing trend of increasing competitiveness among female politicians. In Asia, Taiwan has become both a leader and an exception for its political representation by women. According to the Inter-parliamentary Union's listed data, the average percentage of women in parliament in Asia is 19 percent. Taiwan's current 38 percent is twice the average. Compared with neighboring democracies such as South Korea and Japan, Taiwan's contrast to their 17 percent and 10 percent, respectively, is even greater.² The continual increase in the percentage of women in Taiwan's parliament comes from an unlikely source: an increase in the number of female politicians who are elected in single member districts (SMDs). This was unexpected after Taiwan changed its electoral system for parliamentary members in 2008 from the old single non-transferrable vote (SNTV) system to a mixed member majoritarian (MMM) system.

SMDs have long been regarded as an unfavorable type of electoral district for female candidates.³ So, how did Taiwanese female politicians become competitive and win both parliamentary and mayoral elections in SMDs? This essay illustrates two important findings, using Taiwan's election data since the early 2000s, after Taiwan increased quota levels for local elections and changed its electoral system for national elections. First, gender quotas at the national level, implemented only for seats in the proportional representation (PR) tier in parliamentary elections, contributed little to the cultivation of competitiveness among female politicians. These quotas have been used to reward veteran male politicians and to recruit women from civic organizations to meet the electorate's expectation for diversity. Second, most SMD female politicians, including parliamentary members and mayors, enter electoral politics by running in districts with reserved seats. For those who began their political careers in local councils, such as city or county councils, all chose to run in such districts, without exception. Although SMD female politicians did not rely on reserved seats to win election, their careers were affected by the very existence of gender quotas, in the form of reserved seats.

In the following section, Taiwan's quota institution and electoral system are illustrated. Next, empirical data are presented that reveal how quotas under the SNTV system have, and quotas under the MMM system have not, affected the political competitiveness of female politicians. The essay concludes by calling for further reform of the quota system.

² See the Women in Politics page of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed August 2, 2018).

³ Many works in this field are studies of political representation by women at the state level in the United States, such as: Robert Darcy, Susan Welch, and Janet Clark, "Women Candidates in Single- and Multi-Member Districts: American State Legislative Races," *Social Science Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (1985): 945-953; Richard Matland and Deborah Brown, "District Magnitude's Effect on Female Representation in U. S. State Legislatures," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1992): 469-492; and James King, "Single-Member Districts and the Representation of Women in American State Legislatures: The Effects of Electoral System Change," *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2002): 161-175.

Gender Quotas and Taiwan's Electoral System

Taiwan adopted quotas early and comprehensively. Since the 1950s, gender quotas have been applied to all levels of elections in the form of reserved seats for women.⁴ Before democratization, the number of reserved seats was small, usually between 5 to 10 percent of a district's seats, depending on the district's magnitude. The electoral system was SNTV, so reserved seats were not invoked if female candidates managed to win on their own. After democratization, in 2002, the quota level for local elections was increased and, in 2008, the electoral system for the national parliament was changed to MMM, with one third of the seats allotted to the PR tier and two thirds to the SMD tier.

In local elections, the law requires that for every four elected seats, one must be filled by a woman. This requirement has several results. First, if a district's magnitude is smaller than four, there is no reserved seat in that district. Second, the number of reserved seats in a district with a magnitude of four is the same as in a district with a magnitude of seven, because a district must reach a magnitude of eight to meet the next threshold of an additional reserved seat for the next four elected seats. This result is the same for districts with a magnitude of seven and eleven. Third, reserved seats are not invoked if female politicians are competitive enough to be among the top four, eight, or twelve winners in their districts, because one of every four seats already would be filled by a woman.

Since 2008, in parliamentary elections at the national level, half of the PR seats have been reserved for women. Because the PR seats account for only 30 percent of the total number of seats (34 of 113), the quota level for parliament is only 15 percent. No quota has been set for the SMDs.

When the electoral system for parliament was changed, concerns were raised, especially among women's organizations, that the level of political representation by women would drop because the majority of the seats would be elected through SMDs.⁵ Study of the effect of the electoral system change in Taiwan also showed that the change was not good for advancing the political participation of women in parliament.⁶ But the percentage of female parliamentary members actually increased from 20.9 percent in 2004, the last parliamentary election under SNTV, to 38.1 percent in 2016. Clearly, because half of the PR seats are required by law to be filled by women, and the total

⁴ For a detailed description of Taiwan's history of quota adoption and quota types, see Chang-Ling Huang, "Reserved for Whom? The Electoral Impact of Gender Quotas in Taiwan," *Pacific Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2016): 325-343.

⁵ "Electoral System Changed in Taiwan: Women's Groups Worry about Decrease of Women's Political Participation" (in Chinese), *Epoch Times*, August 27, 2004, <http://www.epochtimes.com/b5/4/8/27/n641909.htm> (accessed February 12, 2018).

⁶ Nathan F. Batto, "Was Taiwan's Electoral Reform Good for Women? SNTV, MMM, Gender Quotas, and Female Representation," *Issues & Studies* 50, no. 2 (2014): 39-76.

number of the PR seats is fixed at thirty-four by law, the increased percentage of female parliamentary members has come from the SMDs.

Literature on the relationship between an electoral system and political representation has long demonstrated that majoritarian electoral systems are disadvantageous to women and other minority groups. The usual argument is that party leaders have more control over a nomination in the PR system, and nominating women under PR is less politically costly compared to their nomination in an SMD.⁷ Also, when voters have only one choice, they tend to prefer the “default” representative, who under most circumstances is a middle-class male from a majority racial or ethnic group. However, PR per se definitely does not benefit underprivileged groups, unless minority representation is either required by law or consciously promoted by political parties.⁸ Still, as an electoral system, PR is more compatible with institutional designs such as quotas for enhancing minority representation, although recent studies have demonstrated that SMDs also could implement gender quotas effectively through various institutional designs.⁹

Like Taiwan, Japan and South Korea also have MMM systems, whose seat distributions are skewed toward the SMD tier. Although Japan’s system links some seats between the two tiers, it is still largely an MMM system. While electoral systems are similar in these three countries, their patterns of adopting the gender quota have been different. Taiwan’s quotas are applied to the PR seats only, Japan has not adopted a gender quota, and South Korea’s adopted quota includes both PR and SMD seats. All three countries, however, have witnessed an increase in the number of women who are elected in the supposedly unfriendly SMDs.

If the low percentage of women in Japan’s lower house can be attributed to the lack of an adopted quota, why has there been an increase in the number of women elected in SMDs? Contemporary research on quotas has largely dispelled the modernization argument that women have been brought into politics because they have attained higher social economic status. Although Frank Thames’s recent study, based on a dataset of ninety-eight democratic countries from 1955 to 2012, showed that socioeconomic factors affected

⁷ Pippa Norris, “Women’s Legislative Participation in Western Europe,” *West European Politics* 8, no. 4 (1985): 90-101, and Robert Darcy, Susan Welch, and Janet Clark, *Women, Elections, and Representation* (New York: Longman, 1994).

⁸ Lane Kenworthy and Melissa Malami, “Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis,” *Social Forces* 78, no. 1 (1999): 235-268.

⁹ For the compatibility between PR and gender quotas, see Wilma Rule, “Women’s Underrepresentation and Electoral Systems,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27, no. 4 (1994): 689-692, and Frank Thames, “Understanding the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women’s Political Representation,” *Politics & Gender* 13 (2017): 379-404. For the discussion of institutional designs of quotas for SMDs, see Skye Christensen and Gabrielle Bardall, “Gender Quotas in Single-Member District Electoral Systems,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4, no. 2 (2016): 246-267.

the level of political representation by women in the long run, the pace could be very slow.¹⁰ Miyuki Kubo and Aie-Rie Lee's research on the relationship between Japan's electoral system and political representation by women did not directly explain the increase of SMD female politicians, but their work shed interesting light on this phenomenon.¹¹

Kubo and Lee showed how Japan's MMM system linked the seats of the two tiers, and how that has affected political representation by women. Japan's system has some features the South Korean and Taiwanese systems do not have. It allows for dual candidacy in both tiers of the mixed-member system and permits multiple candidates to be placed on the party lists with the same ranking. In other words, a political party can select a candidate to run for a single member district seat and place the same individual on the party list. If this candidate wins the election, he or she is the SMD representative; but if the candidate is defeated, this contender still might be elected through the party list. Political parties are allowed to place multiple candidates at the same rank on the party list, and by law the candidate who wins the seat is the one with the best *sekihairitsu*, or best-loser ratio.¹² This institutional design seems to make the supposedly woman-friendly party list unfriendly. If a woman seeks to be elected through the party list, she first must be a strong enough candidate in a district; if she is not, her best-loser ratio will not be high enough for her to garner a seat from the party list. Within Japan's political context, however, the gender and political implications could be different.

Although Kubo and Lee did not directly discuss how the lack of gender quotas affects female candidates under the Japanese electoral system, they pointed out that all major political parties, such as the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), tend to nominate women for dual candidacy. This might give Japanese women an incentive to run because, even if they lose in the SMD, they still might be elected through the PR tier, as long as they do not lose badly. It also gives the political parties an incentive to nominate more women. If a woman succeeds in unseating a rival party's candidate in an SMD, it is a major victory, especially if the woman has been nominated as a challenger. This "same ranking rule" also solves the commitment problem for political parties in promoting women's political participation because they can claim that, by placing male and female politicians in the same rank, they are fair to both. Data provided by Kubo and

¹⁰ Thames, "Understanding the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Political Representation."

¹¹ Miyuki Kobo and Aie-Rie Lee, "Electing Women to the Japanese Lower House: The Impact of the Electoral System," *Asian Women* 33, no. 2 (2017): 69-99.

¹² *Sekihairitsu* is also known as the ratio of the margin of defeat. It is calculated by dividing the number of votes a candidate received in his/her electoral district by the district winner's votes. For example, if the district winner received 10,000 votes, and the defeated candidate 9,000 votes, his/her *sekihairitsu* would be 90 percent.

Lee show that women who have run as challengers in the SMDs have been elected more often in the past six elections.¹³

Regarding South Korea, Ki-young Shin's study of the spillover effect of gender quotas provides a clear explanation for the increase of SMD female politicians in recent elections.¹⁴ There are two factors that have led female politicians to run in SMDs after they have served a term via the party list. The first is that South Korea's major political parties have adopted a "no reelection" rule for their PR seats. Except in a very few cases, they do not nominate incumbent PR politicians for PR seats. The second reason is that South Korea, in addition to a 50 percent gender quota for the PR seats, has a 30 percent gender quota for candidate selection for the SMDs seats, although the legal wording and enforcement mechanisms for the SMD quotas are much weaker. In this type of institutional environment, PR female politicians have an incentive to run in SMDs after they finish their terms, and political parties have an incentive to nominate former PR politicians, especially those of the caliber needed to successfully run in the SMDs, while fulfilling quota requirements. With more experienced female politicians running in the SMDs, chances are that more women will be elected.

Taiwan's electoral and quota regulations under the MMM system are much more straightforward than either Japan's or South Korea's. As mentioned above, a 50 percent gender quota is applied to the PR seats, but there is no quota requirement for SMD nominations or seats. The MMM system in Taiwan does not allow dual candidacy, nor does it allow multiple candidates to have the same ranking on party lists. Although major political parties have a two-term limit rule for anyone placed on the party lists, the lack of quota requirements for candidate selection in SMDs provides no incentive to political parties to move women from the party lists to the SMDs. Without enough party support, female politicians elected through PR seats find running in the SMDs quite challenging, especially if they have lacked campaign experience before or after their placement on party lists.

Little Effect of PR Quotas on SMD Elections

Since gender quotas are adopted to enhance political representation by women, it is worth investigating whether PR seats can be an incubator for women's eventual success in running for and winning SMD seats. Taiwan's data show that PR quotas have not helped women to run for office, let alone win, in SMDs. Between 2008 and 2016, among the thirty-five women who were elected in the SMDs, only three had previously held PR seats. And, two of the three had experience in winning elections under the old SNTV system.

¹³ Kubo and Lee, "Electing Women to the Japanese Lower House," 86.

¹⁴ Ki-young Shin, "Women's Sustainable Representation and the Spillover Effect of Electoral Gender Quotas in South Korea," *International Political Science Review* 35, no. 1 (2014): 80-92.

In other words, their running and winning in the SMDs was not enhanced by experience holding PR seats. Taiwan's gender quotas for parliamentary elections obviously have not had the spillover effect found in South Korea. Such an effect does not exist for female politicians, nor for male politicians. Among the ninety-one male politicians elected in the SMDs during the same period, only three had previously held PR seats. Thus, under Taiwan's MMM system, the PR tier and the SMD tier seem to have little connection to each other.

A closer look at the party lists also reveals that PR seats have been used with different implications for genders. These seats are used to reward veteran male politicians and to recruit female members from civic organizations to meet the expectation for diversity among the PR seats. Political parties in Taiwan usually place two types of people on their party lists: veteran politicians and members from civic organizations who represent various social interests. The latter category sometimes includes professionals such as lawyers or college professors. The selection of veteran politicians for the PR seats is related to internal resource distribution within the political parties, and the selection of members of civic organizations is designed to attract voters from diverse fields. As table 1 indicates, in 2008 when the MMM system was used for the first time, politicians elected through the party lists, both men and women, tended to be veteran politicians. But from 2012 onward, the gender difference has become clear: female politicians have shouldered the expectation for diversity. Gender quotas therefore have become quotas not only for women, but also for various other underrepresented social groups. This pattern is quite consistent with the quota experience in other countries in which women usually are recruited to represent not just women, but also other minority categories.¹⁵ In contrast, among the eight males in table 1 who are categorized as coming from civic groups, only one was from a civic organization, and he was a long-term activist for disability rights. All others were male college professors who were placed on a party list mainly by small parties.

Any parity law or regulation also could be regarded a quota for men. With the 50 percent gender quota applied to Taiwan's party-list seats, the candidate selection pattern shows that, along with the opportunities to bring more women from civic organizations into politics, came more opportunities for powerful men to remain in politics.

Since so few PR politicians were moved to run in the SMDs, what happened to the PR politicians after they reached their term limits? This is a question worth exploring for its long-term trends, but the current data also show a gender contrast. We examined the careers of PR politicians from the 2008 and 2012 elections and found that eighteen of thirty-five (51 percent) female politicians from the PR tier are no longer in politics, while ten of thirty-

¹⁵ Melanie Hughes, "Intersectionality, Quotas, and Minority Women's Political Representation Worldwide," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (2011): 604-620.

Table 1. Background of Party-List Politicians

Election Year	Male			Female		
	Total Number	Veteran Politicians	Civic Groups	Total Number	Veteran Politicians	Civic Groups
2008	17	16 (94%)	1 (6%)	17	15 (88%)	2 (12%)
2012	16	13 (81%)	3 (19%)	18	9 (50%)	9 (50%)
2016	16	12 (75%)	4 (25%)	18	7 (39%)	11 (61%)

Source: Compiled and calculated by the author based on data from Taiwan’s parliament (the Legislative Yuan), <https://www.ly.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=110> (accessed May 10–20, 2017).

three (30 percent) male politicians from the PR tier left politics. If we exclude those politicians who either passed away or went on to hold executive positions in corporations with government shares, the number of males drops to nine (27 percent). It is evident that once their terms on the PR tier had expired, it was less likely that female representatives would sustain their political careers.

The Motivational Effects of Gender Quotas under SNTV

While the PR quotas have had little effect on SMD elections, gender quotas under SNTV clearly have inspired more women to enter politics. For a long time, Taiwan’s elections used the SNTV system nationally, and local elections remain under SNTV. In Taiwan’s post-World War II political context, local politics carried particular significance because only local councils were subjected to periodic reelections under authoritarian rule from 1949 to 1987. Elections for the national parliament were not held until 1969, and then only for a small number of the so-called “supplemental seats,” not for the entire parliament. Although elections under authoritarian rule were unfair, they could be competitive to some extent. Local elections therefore provided an important arena in which politicians could cultivate their skills and accumulate resources. Most political families gained their influence through rounds of local elections. After democratization, local politics became a reasonable starting point for any political aspirant, regardless of whether he or she came from a political family.

Local elections in Taiwan always have had gender quotas in the form of women’s reserved seats. Early studies of political representation by women under authoritarian rule showed that women usually ran in districts with reserved seats, even when the number of reserved seats was low.¹⁶ Recent

¹⁶ Shuang-Lian Liang and Hong-Yuan Chu, “From Greenhouse to Independence: Exploring the Causes for the Election of Taiwan Provincial Council Women, 1951–1989” (in Chinese), *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History* 1 (1993): 91-124.

studies confirm the early findings with data after democratization, showing that gender quotas in local elections induce women, especially the most competitive ones, to run.¹⁷ Table 2 illustrates the significant impact of these motivational effects. It shows the declining use of reserved seats in Taiwan’s local elections. With the increase in women’s reserved seats, fewer and fewer women depend on reserved seats to win election to local councils. In the most recent election in 2018, the percentages of women who were elected through reserved seats in all levels of local councils dropped to less than 3 percent. In the six metropolises, none of the female council members elected in 2018 was elected through reserved seats.

We now see two contrasting effects of gender quotas in current Taiwan regarding political representation by women. First, at the national level, for parliamentary elections using the mixed member electoral system, PR quotas have little effect on enhancing the competitiveness of female politicians, as those elected through party lists have seldom been moved to run in SMDs. Second, regarding local council elections using the SNTV system, gender quotas, in the form of reserved seats that might not be invoked, have enhanced

Table 2. Declining Use of the Reserved Seats in Local Councils

Year/Type	Metropolis		City/County		Town/Township	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
2002	0.0 (0/96)	0.0 (0/27)	3.6 (32/896)	16.2 (32/198)	2.7 (102/3716)	14.0 (102/729)
2005/2006	1.0 (1/96)	2.8 (1/35)	2.9 (26/901)	11.1 (26/234)	2.3 (86/3716)	11.1 (86/777)
2009/2010	0.6 (2/314)	1.9 (2/107)	2.4 (14/592)	8.6 (14/162)	1.6 (36/2322)	6.8 (36/527)
2014	0.3 (1/375)	0.8 (1/133)	1.5 (8/532)	5.5 (8/145)	1.2 (25/2091)	5.3 (25/470)
2018	0.0 (0/380)	0.0 (0/136)	0.8 (4/533)	2.3 (4/171)	2.3 (17/2099)	3.2 (17/524)

Source: Data between 2002 and 2014 are adapted and calculated from Wen-Jong Juang, *The Study of Women’s Reserved Seats in the Electoral System of Our Country: Commissioned Research Report* (in Chinese) (Taipei: Council of Research, Development and Assessment, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, 2012), 108. The 2018 data are compiled and calculated from the database of Taiwan’s Central Election Commission, <http://db.cec.gov.tw/histMain.jsp?voteSel=20181101D2> (accessed December 12–15, 2018).

¹⁷ Nathan F. Batto, Wen-Jong Juang, and Chung-Chu Lin, “From One Fourth to One Third: The Electoral Effects of Reserved Female Seats” (in Chinese), *Soochow Journal of Political Science* 32, no. 1 (2014): 99-141, and Batto, “Was Taiwan’s Electoral Reform Good for Women?”

women’s political competitiveness because the use of reserved seats has declined. While the motivational effects of reserved seats in local elections are clear, what has not been explored is whether gender quotas under SNTV for previous local elections or national elections have affected the competitiveness of female politicians, helping them to win SMD elections.

Gender Quotas and the Careers of SMD Female Politicians

It is well-known and well-established in previous research that many Taiwanese women enter politics because of their family backgrounds.¹⁸ Fewer studies have been conducted on male politicians, although media reports have shown that many male politicians also come from political families. Table 3 shows the family backgrounds of all SMD politicians in the past three parliamentary elections. A person is deemed to come from a “political family” if his or her immediate family includes at least one previous or current politician. That family member is usually a father or brother, but it could be a mother, father-in-law, or sometimes an uncle. As table 3 shows, a high percentage of SMD female politicians has come from political families. It also shows that the percentage, albeit still high in 2016, had declined. Male politicians, on the other hand, are much less likely to come from political families, and their percentage also declined between 2008 and 2016. The difference between female and male politicians is not a surprise. Unless they have come from a political family with established networks, women usually have had a hard time winning in SMDs. In his study of the Japanese political dynasties, Daniel Smith used the term “legacy candidates” or “legacy MPs” to describe politicians having such family backgrounds.¹⁹ His comparative data among twelve democracies show

Table 3. SMDs Politicians from Political Families, 2008–2016

Election Year	Male		Female	
	2008	56	22 (39.3%)	16
2012	54	15 (27.8%)	19	14 (73.7%)
2016	50	14 (28%)	23	14 (60.9%)

Source: Compiled and calculated by the author based on various media reports and data from Taiwan’s parliament (the Legislative Yuan), <https://www.ly.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=110>various (accessed February 18-25, 2018).

¹⁸ Shuang-Lian Liang and Hong-Yuan Chu, “From Greenhouse to Independence”; Chen-Yin Chiang, “Women as Political Actors: Reflections on the Image of Women in Politics in Taiwan” (in Chinese), *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 76 (2009): 277-316; and Chen-Yin Chiang, “Matrices of Gender Hierarchy Behind Taiwanese Women’s Political Participation” (in Chinese), *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 82 (2011): 179-240.

¹⁹ Daniel M. Smith, *Dynasties and Democracy: The Inherited Incumbency Advantage in Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

there is a greater percentage of legacy parliamentary members among female than male office holders.²⁰ In other words, cross-country experience shows that women rely more on “an existing family history in politics” to overcome various challenges of participating in politics.²¹

The reliance of SMD politicians on political families also can be seen among those who were elected as city or county mayors, including those who won the mayoral seat in a metropolis. Between 1997 and 2018, fifteen women won mayoral elections twenty-one times. Among the fifteen, only three did not come from a political family. This means that 80 percent of the women who have been elected as mayors over the past twenty years have come from political families.

While most female SMD politicians, including both parliamentary members and mayors, have come from political families, a fact previously ignored but worth mentioning is that, despite having the support of political families, many won their first elections in districts with reserved seats. Table 4 shows the number of SMD female politicians who ran in districts with reserved seats when they entered politics. Many entered politics through local councils, and a few entered politics through parliamentary elections under the old electoral system, which at the time also was SNTV. In other words, the motivational effects of gender quotas under SNTV mentioned above also existed for parliamentary elections before 2008. One can see from the data that approximately 80 percent of the SMDs’ parliamentary members and 70 percent of the female mayors won their first elections in districts with reserved seats. Most had their first elections in local councils, usually city or county councils, and some were first elected as members of the Taiwan Provincial Council. The Taiwan Provincial Council was no longer an elected council after government reorganization in 1997. Under authoritarian rule, however, it was the highest-level local council subjected to periodic reelection. Since the electorate for this council was more than 90 percent of the total electorate, many important political figures, male and female, began their political careers as members of the Taiwan Provincial Council.²²

²⁰ Ibid., 248.

²¹ Ibid., 245.

²² That the Taiwan Provincial Council was a local council might be confusing for those who are not familiar with the politics between China and Taiwan. When the Nationalist Party was defeated by the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Nationalist Party moved the Republic of China government to Taiwan. The Chinese Communist Party then established the People’s Republic of China in China. The Republic of China since then controls only the territory of Taiwan and some offshore small islands between Taiwan and China. The electorate for the national election of the Republic of China therefore includes the electorates of Taiwan and those offshore small islands. After democratization, Taiwan reorganized its state structure and the Taiwan Provincial Council became a consultative council which was no longer elected.

Table 4. Percentage of Female SMD Politicians
Who Won Their First Elections in Districts with Reserved Seats

Year	Female SMD Parliamentary Members/ Mayors	First Won as Local Council Members in Districts with Reserved Seats	First Won as Parliamentary Members under SNTV in Districts with Reserved Seats	Percentage
2008	16	11	2	81.3
2012	19	13	3	84.2
2016	23	13	5	78.3
1997-2018	15	8	3	73.3

Source: Data compiled and calculated by the author from Election Records (Xuan Ju Shi Lu) of various years, published by the Central Election Commission, and from the online database of the Central Election Commission, db.cec.gov.tw (accessed December 10–20, 2018).

Another fact is also significant. Among the SMD female politicians whom we studied, including elected parliamentary members from SMDs between 2008 and 2016 and female mayors between 1997 and 2018, those who began their careers in local councils all ran in districts with reserved seats when they entered politics. There was no exception. The few SMD female politicians who entered politics without previously running in a district with reserved seats usually came from very powerful political families. One example is Chang Hua-Kuan from Chiayi County. Her late husband was once a member of parliament and the Central Standing Committee of the then ruling Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT). Chang switched party identification to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) when it was in power for the first time in the early 2000s and won a parliamentary seat under SNTV. The district in which she ran had no reserved seat. After winning two parliamentary elections under SNTV, she won her third in an SMD under the MMM system and eventually went on to become the first female mayor of Chiayi County. Another example is Chang Chia-Chun. Her father was a dominant political figure in Yunlin County and her family essentially controls the distribution channels for Taiwan’s produce market. She entered politics in 2008, winning the parliamentary election in the SMD in Yunlin County and won that seat again in 2012.

Although few of the SMD politicians ever were elected through reserved seats, some were elected through reserved seats at the entry point of their political careers. The most significant case is Chang Wen-Ying, a DPP politician. She first was elected through a reserved seat in the 1989 Taiwan Provincial Council election and was elected again without using a reserved seat. After serving two terms in the council, she was elected as the first female mayor of Taichung City, Taiwan’s third largest city. Chiang Ling-Chun’s experience

also is significant. A KMT politician, she first entered politics in 2002 and was elected as a Kaohsiung County Council member through a reserved seat. She was reelected in 2005 without using the reserved seat, and then moved on to win an SMD seat for parliament in 2008. Sometimes quotas can play a crucial role, even for a veteran female politician. Yeh Yi-Jin is such a case. From a political family, she first was elected in 1994 without relying on her district's reserved seat for the Taiwan Provincial Council. She went on to become a two-term member of parliament under the SNTV system, again without using a reserved seat. The third time she ran for parliament, in the same district, she was elected through the reserved seat. That election was the last parliamentary election under the SNTV system. When the system was changed to the MMM system in 2008, she was elected in an SMD and won again in her district in 2012 and 2016. In other words, without the reserved seat that enabled her to be elected in 2005 and to remain the incumbent member of parliament, she might not have been able to win in 2008 when the electoral system was changed.

The motivational effects of gender quotas for female political aspirants should not be underestimated. Political under-representation by women is said to be affected by factors from both the supply and demand sides.²³ On the supply side, women do not run. On the demand side, women are not nominated or elected. In Lawless and Fox's survey of thousands of the most qualified potential female candidates in the United States, respondents who had achievements in various professional fields demonstrated why women were reluctant to run. They were less encouraged, less socialized, and less interested in running for office than male counterparts.²⁴ The undersupply of female candidates arguably can be solved, however, by creating demand through institutional reforms such as implementing gender quotas.²⁵ Taiwan's experience under a comparative light is therefore interesting. The fact that such a high percentage of competitive female politicians have chosen to run in districts with reserved seats when they enter politics, despite having support from a political family, is telling. If being a legacy candidate helps female aspirants to reduce entry barriers to politics, running in districts with reserved seats is an added assurance.

Motivational effects also can be examined from another angle. In the current local elections, any district with a magnitude smaller than four has no reserved seat for women. In the 2018 local elections, excluding the indigenous districts, there were 159 electoral districts nationwide for city and county

²³ Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski, *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²⁴ Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox, *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁵ Katherine Opello, *Gender Quotas, Parity Reform, and Political Parties in France* (New York: Lexington, 2006).

councils of which fifty-two did not have any seat reserved for women because their magnitude was smaller than four. Among these fifty-two districts, twenty-seven, more than half, had no women running for office.²⁶ If we exclude the figures from the metropolis, among the thirty-seven districts with no reserved seat, twenty-three, or more than 60 percent of the districts, had no women running for election. This means that women still avoid electoral districts without reserved seats, even though they rarely need those seats to win contests in local elections.

Reserved seats lead to greater political competition among politicians, for both female and male candidates. Female political aspirants are induced to run in districts having reserved seats. Political parties will not allow rival parties to capture women's reserved seats easily, so they all nominate women in those districts. Since there is competition between or among these female candidates, political parties nominate competitive women. When competitive women appeared on the scene, under the SNTV system, male candidates in the same districts were forced to become more competitive, otherwise they would not win. The increased rivalry helps to cultivate female politicians' competitiveness and eventually leads them to run in SMDs for parliament or for mayor.

Conclusion: More Quota Reforms Needed

Given Taiwan's long history of having quotas, despite some recent work, the effects and implications of Taiwan's gender quotas remain understudied. Previous studies have shown that female politicians who have been elected through reserved seats largely have had equal or better qualifications than the men they replaced.²⁷ Early and recent studies also have shown that women tend to run in districts with reserved seats and the increase of reserved seats has inspired more women to run under the SNTV system. This essay confirms the motivational effects by showing that the most competitive female politicians, those who ran and won in SMDs, entered electoral politics mostly by running in districts with reserved seats, even when they enjoyed the resources and support of political families. Moreover, this essay shows that gender quotas for the PR seats in parliamentary elections under the current MMM system have not helped to enhance competitiveness among female politicians. Most

²⁶ Gender quotas are applied in indigenous districts in a different way. The indigenous districts are permitted to have women's reserved seats calculated across districts within the same city or county because the magnitude of indigenous districts tends to be small due to the population size of indigenous peoples. If a city or county has more than one indigenous district, women's reserved seats are applied according to the combined magnitudes of those districts. For example, if a city or county has two districts and each district has a magnitude of two, among the four elected council members, at least one must be a woman. If a reserved seat is invoked, that woman should be the female loser with the best results from these two districts.

²⁷ Huang, "Reserved for Whom?"

women who have been placed on party lists have had no previous experience in elections and were recruited by political parties to meet the diversity expectation for party-list candidates. The quota and electoral system design, along with the term limits imposed by political parties, have given no incentive to political parties to move the PR women into SMD contests. On the other hand, PR women have few resources, such as local networks, that are important to run in SMD elections and succeed.

Although Taiwan already is a leader in political representation by women in Asia, further reforms are needed. The declining use of reserved seats in local elections shows that the current level of gender quotas has reached a saturation point. A proposal by feminist activists, which has been adopted into the government's policy framework, is to increase quota levels and change the reserved seats for women to gender-neutral quotas. The proposal is that in any electoral district, for every three elected seats, each sex should have at least one seat. This proposal is not yet on the legislative agenda, although the government has held several rounds of meetings on the subject. This reform would make the gender quotas obsolete when female politicians reached 30 percent in all districts that have a magnitude larger than three and, since the change would be implemented in a gender-neutral way, it might eventually enhance the chances of some male politicians to be elected, as well. Many countries have adopted gender quotas as a Temporary Special Measure (TSM) under the United Nation's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).²⁸ The international trend is clear: quotas should be temporary, but considered as special measures to reduce gender bias that is embedded in existing social and political institutions. Once these institutions become more gender-balanced, quotas should be removed or rendered obsolete.

More challenging is achieving the reform needed for parliament. Like the total number of parliamentary seats, gender quotas for parliamentary elections are written into the constitution, so any change requires a constitutional amendment. The imbalanced distribution of PR and SMD seats has been a problem ever since the MMM system was first adopted. If the ratio of the two tiers' seats could reach 1:1, instead of the current 1:2, gender quotas for the parliament would immediately jump from 15 percent to 25 percent. Political momentum is necessary to achieve a constitutional amendment, however, because any amendment requires the support of three fourths of the

²⁸ Christie Arendt, "From Critical Mass to Critical Leaders: Unpacking the Political Conditions Behind Gender Quotas in Africa," *Politics & Gender* 14, no. 3 (2018): 295-322. A gender quota is not the only type of quota adopted in electoral politics. Many countries also have ethnic or racial quotas for candidate selection or elections. See Hughes, "Intersectionality, Quotas, and Minority Women's Political Representation Worldwide," and Mala Htun, *Inclusion without Representation in Latin America: Gender Quotas and Ethnic Reservations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

parliamentary members, which means that the two major parties must reach a certain level of consensus before initiating the amendment process. Such momentum does not appear easily achievable.

While constitutional reform seems to be a long shot, quota reforms for local elections are a feasible and reachable goal. As this essay shows, gender quotas under SNTV have created enough dynamics to make females strong contenders in politics. If the reform of gender quotas in local elections were carried out, not only would we see an increased number of female politicians, but also an advancement in their competitive strength.