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Gendered Democratic Participation on Social Media; Kenya's Social Media

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Abstract

Gender is an important consideration in development. It is a way of looking at how social norms and power structures impact on the lives and opportunities available to different groups of men and women. Globally, more women than men live in poverty. Women are also less likely than men to receive basic education and to be appointed to a political position nationally and internationally. Understanding that men and women, boys and girls experience poverty differently, and face different barriers in accessing services, economic resources and political opportunities, helps to target interventions. Before undertaking a gender analysis, it is important to understand the concept of 'gender'. The World Development Report (WDR) 2012 defines gender as socially constructed norms and ideologies, which determine the behaviour and actions of men and women. Understanding these gender relations and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite for understanding individuals' access to and distribution of resources, their ability to make decisions and the ways in which women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development. Compared with men, women control fewer political and economic resources, including land, employment and traditional positions of authority. Acknowledging and incorporating these gender inequalities into programmes and analyses is therefore extremely important, both from a human rights perspective and to maximize impact and socioeconomic development. The WDR highlights the importance of directly targeting the persistent constraints and obstacles to women's equality (especially in areas of economic empowerment, educational gaps, household/societal voice, and violence against women) in order to enhance productivity and improve longer-term development outcomes. Gender equality is also important for sustainable peace, and there is a growing body of empirical evidence suggesting that a higher level of gender inequality is associated with higher risks of internal conflict.

Key Words: Gendered, Democratic, Participation, Social Media and Kenya

Introduction

Gender is an important consideration in development. It is a way of looking at how social norms and power structures influence the lives and opportunities available to different groups of men and women. Globally, more women than men live in poverty. Women are also less likely as men to receive basic education and appointment to political position nationally and internationally. Understanding that men and women, boys and girls experience poverty differently, and face different barriers in accessing services, economic resources and political opportunities, helps to target interventions.

What Is Gender and Why Does It Matter?

WDR, 2012 defines gender as 'socially constructed norms and ideologies, which determine the behaviour and actions of men and women'. Understanding these gender relations and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite for understanding individuals' access to and distribution of resources, their ability to make

decisions and the ways in which women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development.

Background

Media play important roles in society. They report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilize citizens with regard to various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, and entertain (Llanos and Nina, 2011). As such, the media can be an important factor in the promotion of gender equality, both within the working environment (in terms of employment and promotion of female staff at all levels) and in the representation of women and men (in terms of fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language).

(Llanos and Nina, 2011). How can journalists and other actors working in the media contribute to gender equality? This handbook aims to assist people working in the media to assess progress on gender equality, identify challenges, and contribute to debates and policy formulation. It urges those working in the media to do more to confront gender distortions in newsrooms and in unions.

Participation and Influence of Women in the Media

Studies have found that although the number of women working in the media has been increasing globally, the top positions (producers, executives, chief editors and publishers) are male dominated ((Llanos and Nina, 2011). This disparity is particularly evident in Africa, where cultural impediments to women fulfilling the role of journalist remain (e.g. travelling away from home, evening work and covering issues such as politics and sports, which are considered to fall within the masculine domain). The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), 2009), reports that throughout the world, female journalists are more likely to be assigned 'soft' subjects such as family, lifestyle, fashion and arts. The 'hard' news, politics and the economy, is much less likely to be written or covered by women.

The level of participation and influence of women in the media also has implications for media content: female media professionals are more likely to reflect other women's needs and perspectives than their male colleagues are. It is important to acknowledge, however, that not all women working in the media will be gender aware and prone to cover women's needs and perspectives; and it is not impossible for men to effectively cover gender issues. Recent research from 18 disparate countries shows that male and female journalists' attitudes do not differ significantly (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012). Nonetheless, the presence of women on the radio, television and in print is more likely to provide positive role models for women and girls, to gain the confidence of women as sources and interviewees, and to attract a female audience.

Byerly, (2011). What is the condition of gender equality in the global news media. This study presents findings from its analysis of news company behaviour in relation to gender equality in staffing, salaries and policies. It finds that men occupy the vast majority of governance and top management jobs and newsgathering positions in most nations included in the study.

Hanitzsch & Hanusch, (2012), conducted a comprehensive survey of male and female journalists in 18 countries across the world. They found that men's and women's opinions and attitudes towards their jobs do not differ significantly by gender. This was tested at the individual, newsroom and national level. Male and female journalists tend to think about their work in largely similar terms. They suggest that the lack of difference means that newsroom culture will not necessarily change if more female journalists are employed, as the professional culture is maintained by both sexes. They do note that the reason for similarities may be that female journalists are forced to adopt male values and are judged by male standards.

Media Content and Portrayal of Men and Women in the Media

Fair gender portrayal in the media should be a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty (White, 2009). Yet, unbalanced gender portrayal is widespread. The Global Media Monitoring Project finds that women are more likely than men to be featured as victims in news

stories and to be identified according to family status. Women are also far less likely than men to be featured in the world's news headlines, and to be relied upon as 'spokespeople' or as 'experts'. Certain categories of women, such as the poor, older women, or those belonging to ethnic minorities, are even less visible.

Stereotypes are also prevalent in every day media. Women are often portrayed solely as homemakers and careers of the family, dependent on men, or as objects of male attention. Stories by female reporters are more likely to challenge stereotypes than those filed by male reporters (Gallagher et al., 2010). As such, there is a link between the participation of women in the media and improvements in the representation of women.

Men are also subjected to stereotyping in the media. They are typically characterized as powerful and dominant. There is little room for alternative visions of masculinity. The media tends to demean men in caring or domestic roles, or those who oppose violence. Such portrayals can influence perceptions in terms of what society may expect from men and women, but also what they may expect from themselves. They promote an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society.

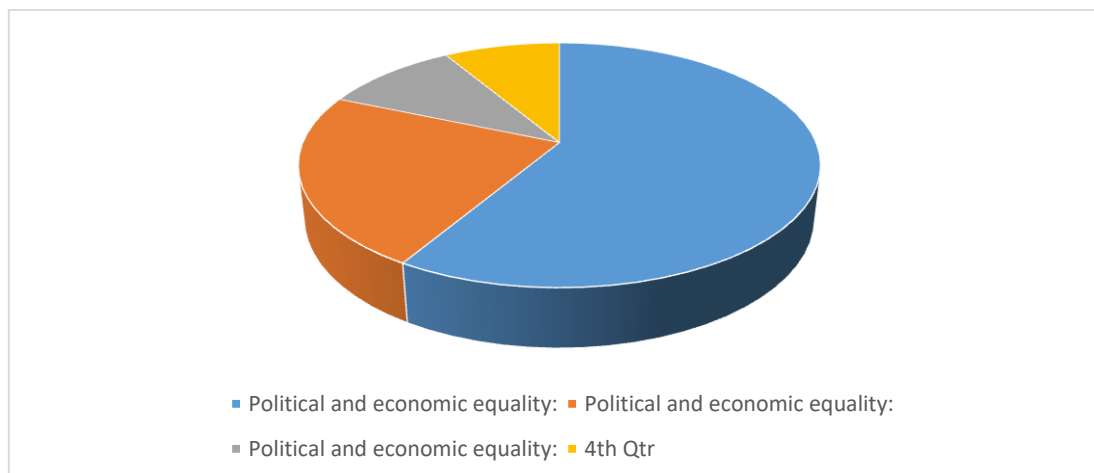
Attention needs to be paid to identifying and addressing these various gender imbalances and gaps in the media. The European Commission (2010) recommends, for example, that there should be a set expectation of gender parity on expert panels on television or radio and the creation of a thematic database of women to be interviewed and used as experts by media professionals. In addition, conscious efforts should be made to portray women and men in non-stereotypical situations.

Statement Problem

Despite the importance of equality for all, including women, as a fundamental principle of liberal democracy, there is much debate in the academic literature regarding the precise relationship between the quality of democracy, gender equality, and security. Early studies found inconclusive and often contradictory empirical results. Ingrid Bego, (2014) found no relationship. Recently, more nuanced studies have been able to dissect the relationship further by revisiting the political, economic, and security dimensions of democracy and gender, and reach more robust conclusions.

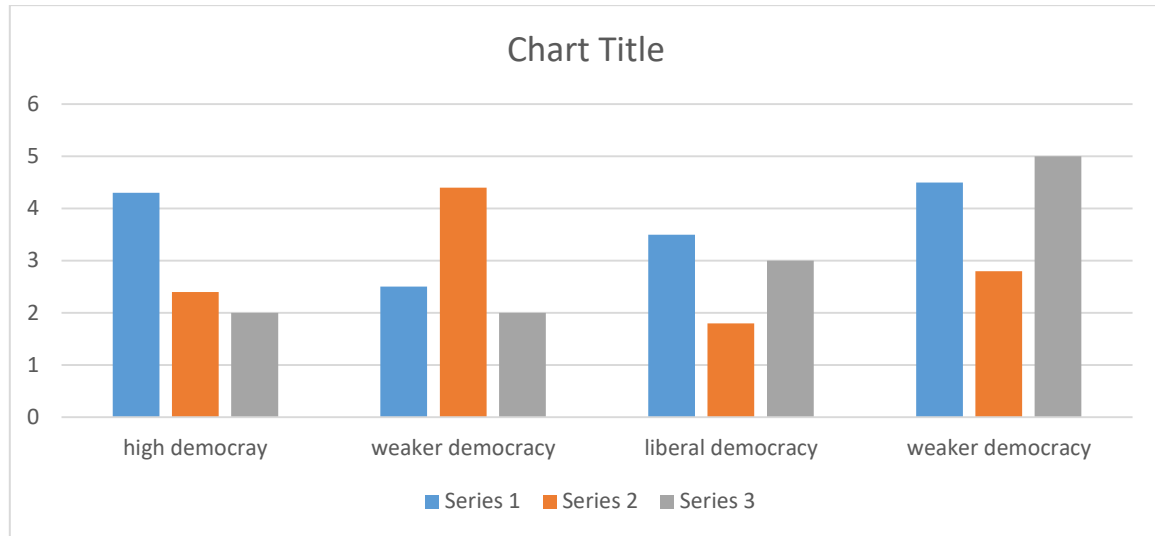
Political and economic equality: Studies focusing on gender equality as measured by women's political and economic participation have found a robust positive correlation between democracy and gender equality with a few important distinctions. Högström, argues that the overall positive correlation disappears when one looks at nations at different income levels separately, (John Högström, 2015) while Beer found the correlation is robust even when controlling for income, if a state's present democratic quality is replaced by democratic "stock" (a nation's democratic history, including women's suffrage). Bjarnegård and Melander (2011), observe a curvilinear relationship between gender equality and democracy in which the two factors are positively correlated up to a certain point, then diverge.

Figure1: Political and economic equality:



Brookings researchers, using a simplified bivariate analysis, found a moderate positive correlation for gender equality at middle and higher democratic quality levels (correlation coefficients of 0.41 and 0.43, respectively), and no correlation among autocratic countries. In other words, countries with higher levels of liberal democracy more consistently exhibit gender parity than weak democracies, and even more so than autocracies, which show more inconsistent and/or wider gender gaps. However, some countries with above average democratic quality scores showed a below average gender equality record (e.g., some South American democracies and former Soviet states). Together, this suggests that the most significant improvement in gender equality is observed at the margin between weak democracies and fully consolidated democracies. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, (2017).

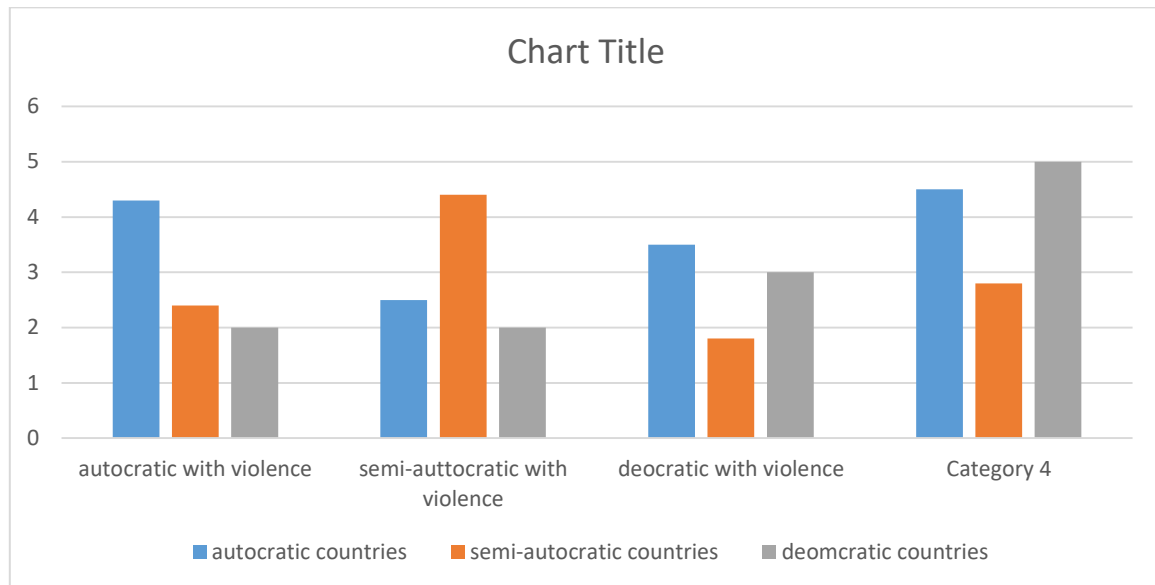
Figure 2; countries with higher levels of liberal democracy more consistently exhibit gender parity than weak democracies



Research on domestic social policy in parliamentary democracies bolsters the case for a positive relationship between higher quality democracies and increasing gender parity. Consistent with the results of Atchison and Down's research on legislatures, governments with higher percentages of female ministers pursue more targeted policies that support gender equality. Atchison and Down's analysis further argued that the presence of women in a cabinet had more impact on gender parity policies than their presence in parliaments.

Thus further evidenced, that the relationship between violence against women and democracy is weak to nonexistent among autocratic and weakly democratic countries (displaying correlation coefficients of only 0.16 and 0.2 respectively), but moderate and significant at higher levels of democratic quality, even when tested with an alternative measurement of democracy (correlation coefficient 0.53). Tia Palermo, Jennifer Bleck, and Amber Peterman,(2015) . Nonetheless, a small number of countries categorized as autocratic record levels of violence against women lower than their peers (Kazakhstan, China, and Azerbaijan).The level of institutional capacity and the enforcement of specific subsets of values (e.g., communist legacy) could help explain this positive effect on the level of women's physical security in some less democratic countries. Conversely, differing definitions of what constitutes violence against women, underreporting by victims for fear of reprisals, underreporting due to social norms that tolerate gender-based violence, underreporting by governments in an effort to artificially inflate gender equality scores, and poor or nonexistent data collection can explain this phenomenon.

Figure 3: countries as autocratic levels of violence against women



Political Representation

According to, Llanos, B. and Nina, J. (2011). 'Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective: A Media Monitoring Manual', UN Women .How can the media contribute to gender equality in election campaigning? The media has in many instances become the principal forum where electoral competition is played out. Some studies reveal that the lower levels of media coverage of women candidates and their proposals compound the structural and institutional obstacles women face in political competition. This publication aims to be a useful tool for promoting fair media coverage during election campaigns, generating an informational approach that includes all candidates' points of view during election campaigns.

However, GMMP media toolkit is designed to train activists to build gender and media campaigns using the findings of GMMP studies. The toolkit explains how best to work with and through the media to put gender on the news agenda.

Grizzle, A. (2012). Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media: Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content. UNESCO. The aim of the Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media is to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment in and through media of all forms. It provides a set of indicators for fostering gender equality within media organisations, and gendered portrayals in media.

Participatory Community Media

Participatory community media initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of women in the media perceive women as producers and contributors of media content and not solely as 'consumers' (Pavarala, Malik, and Cheeli, 2006). Such initiatives encourage the involvement of women in technical, decision-making, and agenda-setting activities. They have the potential to develop the capacities of women as socio-political actors. They also have the potential to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media and to challenge the status quo. In Fiji, women who took part in a participatory video project presented themselves as active citizens who made significant contributions to their families and communities. These recorded images improved the status of women in the minds of government bureaucrats.

Significance of the Participation and Influence of Women in the Media

The approach to Communication for Development (C4D) has evolved over the years. Initially developed after World War II as a tool for diffusion of ideas, communication initiatives primarily involved a one-way

transmission of information from the sender to the receiver. This includes largescale media campaigns, social marketing, dissemination of printed materials, and ‘education entertainment’.

Since then, C4D has broadened to incorporate interpersonal communication: face-to-face communication that can either be one-on-one or in small groups. This came alongside the general push for more participatory approaches to development and greater representation of voices from the South. The belief is that while mass media allows for the learning of new ideas, interpersonal networks encourage the shift from knowledge to continued practice.

Communication for development has thus come to be seen as a way to amplify voice, facilitate meaningful participation, and foster social change. The 2006 World Congress on Communication for Development defined C4D as ‘a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change’. Such two-way, horizontal approaches to communication include public hearings, debates, deliberations and stakeholder consultations, participatory radio and video, community-based theatre and story-telling, and web forums

According to, Debeljak, K., & Shaw, A. (2013), How can C4D be used to address gender issues? The Use Your Voice campaign was implemented in PNG in 2011 to promote speaking out against violence and displace the positive cultural association between violence and masculinity. The campaign used radio, television, and mobile phones to reach audiences, and included weekly shows on national radio, public service announcements, a press conference, and talk shows on television. The campaign also hosted a national competition for best community-based initiative to end gender-based violence in PNG. Within PNG, awareness of and concern about VAW is very low. The campaign was moderately successful in raising awareness, but not in changing behavioural patterns, which are deeply socially embedded.

Communication initiatives aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours have increasingly been used in the health sector since the 1970s. Such initiatives – including television and radio shows, theatre, informational sessions and pamphlets – can and have affected social norms related to gender roles, since gender norms are linked to all facets of health behaviour. Initiatives that seek to affect gender norms and inequities as goals in themselves, however, are a relatively new phenomenon.

Community radio is considered to be an effective tool in promoting women’s empowerment and participation in governance structures. Radio is often the primary source of information for women. It is accessible to local communities, transcends literacy barriers and uses local languages. Afghan Women’s Hour, for example, aims to reach a large cross-section of women and offers a forum to discuss gender, social issues and women’s rights. It was found that female listeners demonstrated a pronounced capacity to aspire, defined as the ‘capacity of groups to envision alternatives and aspire to different futures’ (Bhanot et al., 2009). Women developed specific aspirations in areas that had been recently covered by the programme segments. Their aspirations, however, were not particularly focused. Challenges with other community radio programme initiatives include women’s general under-representation and in some cases, the negative portrayal of women.

Participatory approaches are considered to be an effective tool in encouraging alternate discourses, norms and practices, and in empowering women. The use of sketches and photography in participatory workshops, for example, has encouraged women who have traditionally been reluctant to engage in public forums to express themselves.

In order for the empowerment of women to have a genuine impact, opportunity structures also need to be addressed, such as conservative and male opinion. Afghan Women’s Hour has a large male audience (research by BBC Media Action found that 39% of listeners were men), which provides a way to challenge male views on gender norms. Group educational activities, a common programme for men and boys, also have the potential to contribute to changes in attitudes on health issues and gender relations and, in some cases, changes in behaviour.

It is also important for communication initiatives to build on tradition and culture, not only because this can resonate better with communities, but because it can help to mute opposition from conservative segments of society. The involvement in projects of key community leaders such as teachers, cultural custodians and government officials is also important for greater impact and sustainable change.

Cooper, C., Goodsmith, L., Lotter, E. and Molony, T. (2010). In conflict and post-conflict settings, high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) can result from disruption of social structures, men's loss of traditional roles, poverty, frustration, alcohol and drug abuse, and criminal impunity. Harmful traditional practices (HTP) also pose a threat to conflict-affected populations, and the incidence of HTP may increase in communities during and after conflict, as affected communities often respond by strengthening cultural traditions to deal with the loss experienced through the process of displacement. This review of development communication initiatives addressing GBV, HTP and related health concerns in crisis-affected settings finds a need to increase the number of genuinely participatory development communication programmes in conflict-affected areas where these concerns are pervasive.

Theoretical Framework on Gendered Democratic Participation on Social Media

The theoretical framework of Collective Action and Public Good - from Revolution to Collective Action .A technological revolution, centered around information technologies, began to reshape, at accelerated pace, the material basis of society, (Castells, 2011).

Can Social Media Effectively Include Women's Voices in Decision-Making Processes?

Social media has proved to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanising action on the streets of cities around the world and encouraging policy makers to step up commitments to gender equality. Recent cases in Turkey and India reflect the potential of social media to bridge the gap that often separates grassroots women's activism from policy-making processes. The explosion of social media and unprecedented use by women of new technologies represents important opportunities to bring gender equality and women's rights issues to the forefront of both policy making and media attention.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action recognised and predicted the media's "potential to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women" (para. 234). This call has been echoed in the proposed targets under Goal 5 of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Like in 1995, challenges remain in utilising media to combat discrimination, counter gender stereotypes and raise awareness of women's rights issues. While globally, women are greater users of social media than men (McPherson, 2014), many women, especially in developing countries, still do not have access to this technology due to infrastructure, costs and discriminatory social norms (ICRW, 2010).

This briefing note examines the extent to which social media can be an effective lever to amplify women's voices and identify strategies to better facilitate their impact on decision-making processes. Over the past seven years, the OECD Development Centre's Wikigender platform has been engaging with a cross-section of gender equality actors, from civil society to governments, as a means of promoting women's voices in policy-making fora. This note will present key arguments shared during a recent Wikigender online discussion on "Advancing women's rights through social media: which strategies?". It will review successful social media campaigns, analyse current obstacles, and conclude with recommendations on how social media can effectively broaden the scope for action on women's rights and gender equality within a post-2015 agenda.

Social Media Revolution and Women's Empowerment

Social media has transformed the landscape of how information is shared globally and the relationship between citizens and governments (Shirky, 2011). Beyond its use as a social networking tool, social media allows for the first time any individual to share content and opinions to a global audience, bypassing traditional media or other modes of information transmission (European Parliament, 2013). Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook or Twitter have allowed activists around the world to retransmit events live to a broad online audience, such as during the Arab Spring movement (Pew Research Center, 2012). Local issues become global concerns; local activists become connected with global citizens.

Women's rights movements have also been quick to capitalise on social media's unprecedented political and awareness-raising potential. During the Wikigender online discussion, participants stressed the importance of social media in allowing gender activists to connect within and across borders, at a low cost. The surge of female bloggers has in particular helped attract a younger generation of activists, who represent a key target audience to break established stereotypes and help advance gender equality.

Glass Half Full? The Political Impact of Women's Online Activism

Despite the high visibility and success of many of these campaigns, the extent to which women's online activism has been able to shape and influence policy making remains patchy and unpredictable. This mirrors the struggle of grassroots women's activism to be heard in decisionmaking processes, and the broader marginalisation of women in public life. Although important increases in women's political participation have been achieved since Beijing with 22% of women in parliaments today compared to 11% in 1995, women remain a minority at all levels of governance.

The extent to which women are represented in public life and in decision-making processes has a gendered impact on policy making. Increasing their political participation has been linked to more gender-responsive public policies (Brody, 2009). Recent results of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), a measure of discriminatory social institutions across 160 countries, demonstrate that 86 countries have no quotas to promote women's political participation either at national or subnational level.¹ Limited female representation within formal decision-making and leadership fora is compounded by the marginalisation of women's civil society organisations within national institutional mechanisms.

Countries at lower and middle levels of democratic quality likely do not provide enough civic space or possibilities for engagement for the mutually reinforcing mechanism between democracy and gender equality to work. Highly variable levels of gender equality among weak democracies and autocracies (e.g., Kazakhstan and Rwanda, which score above the mean for their peers, compared to Yemen and Pakistan, which score below) are likely due to factors unrelated to democracy such as political ideology, institutional capacity, and cultural or religious norms and heritage. Llanos, B. and Nina, J. (2011). Biases against women in positions of political power remain deep. However, these variables cannot explain the positive trends in gender equality observed in more consolidated democracies. For example, among the nations with the highest levels of freedom as measured by Freedom House, seven countries, including Sweden and France, have very little violence against women. On the other hand, eight countries rated as "free," including Estonia and Uruguay, have moderately high levels of violence against women—underscoring the necessary but not sufficient condition discussed above. This variance could be attributed to values and norms that do not intersect the relationship between democracy and gender equality, outside factors such as income levels, or differences among democratization processes.

There are two main arguments made regarding the mechanisms through which gender equality influences peace and security—both based on the insight that domestic politics and foreign policy reflect each nation's values and attitudes towards gender equality. Llanos, B. and Nina, J. (2011). That character between women and men, women being inherently less aggressive, and that a more gender-equal society is more peaceful due to more prominent female characteristics. The secondly, that women are not essentially more peaceful than men and that observed differences are due to evolutionary pressures and social learning that result in adaptive behaviors. Llanos, B. and Nina, J. (2011). Critiques of this work revolve around more nuanced understandings of the role of colonialism, race, and slavery in the development of a society's level of male violence and dominance, and the legacy of institutionalized oppression that persists in both weak and strong democracies.

Llanos, B. and Nina, J. (2011), on the relationship between national security and women's security, scholars underline that a society's tolerance of inequality and gender-based violence can influence its foreign policy, resulting in aggressive behavior in the international system. At the domestic level, research has found that

gender inequality is higher in countries affected by civil conflict—circumstances that are usually persistent in countries with low levels of democracy. This suggests that the rise of human trafficking and violence against women—roughly 98 percent of sex trafficking victims are female—could be both a symptom and an outcome of diminished institutional capacity in countries struggling to transition from weak to stronger democracies.

Conclusion

Although there is a positive though moderate relationship between democracy and gender equality, it tends to be rather weak among hybrid regimes. Hence, it cannot be assumed that democratization itself will automatically bring about greater gender equality. However, it also is evident that the most significant improvements regarding gender equality are achieved when countries fully transition into strong, consolidated democracies. Therefore, and considering the necessary role high-quality democracy plays in improving gender equality and security, it is essential for the international community to emphasize women's empowerment and the importance of adopting policies that advance gender equality in any efforts to support countries with incomplete democratization processes.

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