



Faculty of Political Science and Sociology

Final Bachelor's Thesis:

Executive Summary

**Unveiling Gender Disparities in Political Representation:
an analysis on the evolution of Women's Political Representation in China and the
United States.**

Author: Itziar Nieto Rodríguez

Tutor: Nora Sainz Gsell

Date: May 2024

Bachelor's Degree in International Relations

Gender political parity serves as an indicator for measuring the government's commitment to achieve gender equality (Liu, 2023). Despite some major progress in many spheres of society, women remain significantly underrepresented in political roles worldwide. This issue not only hampers the diversification of the profiles with decision-making powers but perpetuates the systemic inequalities and violates basic democratic principles. Addressing this disparity is crucial for ensuring inclusive governance and sustainable development.

Impulsed by the significant inequality of women representation in politics as well as the lack of research conducted on this issue, this thesis seeks to carry out an analytical and comparative study on the evolution of female representation in politics in both China and the United States. The interest in comparing these two countries relies on the significant contrast of their political systems as well as their historical contexts. By doing so, it can be acquired a unique perspective to analyze the diverse factors that shape the changes in women's involvement in politics over time.

The study consists on a qualitative analysis of existing literature, such as academic articles, books and journals, that aspires to enlighten the reasons behind the late incorporation of feminist theory in the field of International Relations. Moreover, the paper seeks to describe both Chinese and American political systems in order to elaborate an overview on the evolution of female representation. On the other hand, the quantitative analysis is comprised by the graphical comparison of four variables (political empowerment, women in ministerial positions, women in parliament and years with a female head of state) retrieved by the World Economic Forum and collected in the Global Gender Gap Reports. The study focuses on the 2006, 2015 and 2023 GGGR which will provide an overview of the evolution of female political engagement in both countries.

The outcome of the comparison reveals a complex landscape of progress and challenges in the path to achieve gender equality in the political sphere. While both China and the United States have witnessed social and political changes, there are still obstacles that hinder full gender parity in politics, such as cultural norms, societal expectations or institutional factors. While China exhibits an unstable evolution and a significant decline on ministerial positions held by women over the recent years, the United States maintains

a slight but steady improvement year by year. However, neither both of them is nowhere close to reach even half of what would constitute gender parity in political representation (World Economic Forum, 2023).

When comparing the political dimension with the other variables that the Global Gender Gap Report contemplates (health, economy and education), we discover that political empowerment is the variable with the widest gender gap. This highlights the urgency to turnaround these global tendencies in order to achieve gender parity in politics. Enhancing policy implementation, creating supportive infrastructures for women in politics, and implementing institutional reforms are essential steps to secure that goal.

According to the World Economic Forum's Reports, if the trends keep the direction they're currently in, it will take 95 more years to reach gender political parity in the North American region and an additional 94 years to close the gender gap in the East Asia and Pacific Region. Globally, the report predicts that it will not be until the year 2.156 that full gender political equality will be reached (World Economic Forum, 2023).

The results of the study reflect the need to have long and effective discussions regarding women's political representation. The data and predictions, encourage the countries to keep making efforts to address gender disparities in political representation. Increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, is a good place to start the journey towards political equity, but it should not stop there, the advocacy for the implementation of gender-inclusive policies and empowering women to participate fully in politics are crucial steps toward building a more equitable society (UN Women, n.d.). Achieving gender equality in political representation is not just a matter of fairness; it is essential for the health and survival of democracies around the world.

Bibliography

- Abdulsada, I. (2023). "Feminist Theorizing in the International Relations Discipline" *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Retrieved from: https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss2/13/?utm_source=vc.bridgew.edu%2Fjiws%2Fvol25%2Fiss2%2F13&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages
- Arenal, C. & Sanahuja, J. (2017) (eds.) *Teoría de las Relaciones Internacionales*. Madrid, Tecnos Editorial.
- Chen, M. (2022). "Innocent Young Girls: The Search for Female Provincial Leaders in China" *Cambridge University Press*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s030574102200042x>
- Chen, M. (2023). "Where are the women in Chinese politics?" *East Asia Forum*. Retrieved from: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/05/25/where-are-the-women-in-chinese-politics/>
- Constitution of the People's Republic of China. (1982). "Constitution of the People's Republic of China adopted on December 4, 1982 by the Fifth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China at its fifth session". Retrieved from: https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/lawsregulations/201911/20/content_WS5ed8856ec6d0b3f0e9499913.html
- Ginsburg, R. (1988). "Remarks on Women Becoming Part of the Constitution", 6(1) *Law & Inequality*. 17. Retrieved from: https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/lawineq/vol6/iss1/4/?utm_source=scholarship.law.umn.edu%2Flawineq%2Fvol6%2Fiss1%2F4&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages
- Herre, B. (2024). "Women have made major advances in politics - but the world is still far from equal" *OurWorldInData.org*. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/women-political-advances>
- Horowitz, J. & Goddard, I. (2023). "Women and political leadership ahead of the

- 2024 election” *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/09/27/women-and-political-leadership-ahead-of-the-2024-election/>
- IPU & UN Women (2021). “Women in Politics: 2021” *IPU*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ipu.org/women-in-politics-2021>
- IPU & UN Women (2023) “Women in Politics: 2023” *UN Women*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>
- IPU. (2021a). “Women in Parliament in 2020” *IPU*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ipu.org/women-in-parliament-2020>
- IPU. (2021b). “Women in politics: new data shows growth but also setbacks” *IPU*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipu.org/news/women-in-politics-2021>
- IPU. (2022). “Women in Parliament in 2021” *IPU*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2022-03/women-in-parliament-in-2021>
- IPU. (2023). “Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments” *IPU Parline*.
Global data on national parliaments. Retrieved from:
<https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=7&year=2022>
- Jiang, X. & Zhou, Y. (2024). “When Socialist Legacy Meets International Norms: Gender Quota Adoption and Institutional Change in China” *Taylor & Francis Online*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/10670564.2023.2299964?needAccess=true>
- Kane, M. (2016). “Where does the US stand on gender quotas?” *Represent Women*. Retrieved from:
https://www.representwomen.org/where_does_the_us_stand_on_gender_quotas
- Liu, Y. (2023). “Why Are Chinese Women Underrepresented in Government: A Comparative Analysis of Women's Political Representation in China and

- Vietnam” *Knowledge @ U Chicago*. Retrieved from:
<https://knowledge.uchicago.edu/record/7175?v=pdf>
- Paxton, P., Hughes, M. & Barnes, T. (2019). "Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective." Sage
- Pérez, K. (2017) “Estudios de seguridad: de la visión tradicional a los enfoques críticos” En Arenal & Sanahuja (2017) (eds.), op. cit., p. 301 – 328.
- Rodríguez, I. (2017). “En los márgenes de la disciplina: feminismo y Relaciones Internacionales” En Arenal & Sanahuja (2017) (eds.), op. cit., p. 243 – 269.
- Smith, S. (2018). “Introducing Feminism in International Relations” *EInternational Relations*. Retrieved from: https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/04/feminism-in-international-relationstheory/#google_vignette
- The Economist. (2022). “China’s problem with female representation is getting worse. Why there are no women on the Politburo” *The Economist*. Retrieved from: <https://www.economist.com/china/2022/10/27/chinas-problem-withfemale-representation-is-getting-worse>
- The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. (2024). “Chinese Communist Party” *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-Communist-Party>
- UN Women (2021a) “Statement by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women Executive Director, on International Women’s Day 2021” *UN Women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/3/statement-ed-phumzileinternational-womens-day-2021>
- UN Women (2021b). “Press release: Women in Politics: New data shows growth but also setbacks” *UN Women*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/3/press-release-womenin-politics-new-data-shows-growth-but-also-setbacks>

UN Women (2024) “Facts and figures: Women’s leadership and political participation”.

UN Women. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-politicalparticipation/facts-and-figures>

UN Women. (2022). “Women’s representation in local government: A global analysis”

UN Women. Retrieved from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/01/womens-representation-in-local-government>

UN Women. (n.d.). “Political Participation of Women”. *UN Women. Asia and the*

Pacific. Retrieved from: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/governance/political-participation-of-women>

UNDP. (n/d). “Women’s political participation” *UNDP Global: Governance for people*

and planet. Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/governance/womens-political-participation>

World Economic Forum. (2006). “Global Gender Gap Report 2006”. *World*

Economic Forum. Retrieved from: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2006/>

World Economic Forum. (2015). “Global Gender Gap Report 2015”. *World*

Economic Forum. Retrieved from: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2015/>

World Economic Forum. (2022). “Global Gender Gap Report 2022”. *World*

Economic Forum. Retrieved from: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>

World Economic Forum. (2023). “Gender Equality is Stalling: 131 Years to Close the

Gap” *World Economic Forum.* Retrieved from: <https://www.weforum.org/press/2023/06/gender-equality-is-stalling-131years-to-close-the-gap/>

World Economic Forum. (2023). “Global Gender Gap Report 2023”. *World*

Economic Forum. Retrieved from:

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/>

Xiajuan, G. & Litao, Z. (2010). "Women's Political Participation in China" *National University of Singapore*. Retrieved from:
chromeextension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://research.nus.edu./
eai/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/11/Vol1No3_GuoXiaojuanZhaoLitao.pdf

Zeng, B. (2014) "Women's Political Participation in China: Improved or Not?" *Journal of International Women's Studies*. Retrieved from:
<https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol15/iss1/9/>