

How Parties Evaluate Compulsory Quotas: A Study of the Implementation of the ‘Parity’ Law in France¹

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ABSTRACT

The study of electoral quotas is often focused on tangible outputs, with far less research considering the perspectives of the political parties charged with quota implementation. Using the French ‘parity’ law as a case study, this article explores how political parties will respond to a compulsory quota and seek to incorporate it into the candidate selection process. Parties are faced with competing and contradictory demands throughout this process, and the ordering and evaluation of these demands depends on the party in question. A model is offered that illuminates how parties’ underlying goals will dictate their trajectory through the process of deciding whether and how to implement quotas.

ELECTORAL quotas have become an increasingly popular way of addressing the persistent problem of the under-representation of certain social groups, most notably women. In addition to voluntary party quotas, a more recent trend has been the introduction of compulsory candidate quotas, with 44 countries worldwide having a constitutional and/or legal obligation for parties to implement quotas.² Despite their legal status, compulsory quotas have not always proven to be effective. Most studies of quotas have focused on tangible outputs, with far less research considering the perspectives of the political parties charged with quota implementation, even though the latter are essential for explaining variations in the efficacy of quotas. Using the French ‘parity’ law as a case study, this article explores how political parties respond to a compulsory quota and seek to incorporate it into the candidate selection process. Compulsory quotas limit the options available to parties when selecting candidates, but this in itself does not explain why some parties are more inclined to implement quotas than others. I posit that it is necessary to consider not only the range of options available to parties but also the way in which they prioritise between these options in order to determine how likely each party is to comply with a quota. The case study of parity in France illuminates how underlying party goals, such as ideological coherence or electoral success, are key in understanding how parties evaluate quotas.

The 'parity' law requires all French parties to field an equal number of male and female candidates to all elections. Since its introduction in 2000, parity has been implemented at all levels of election in France and its impact to date has been very variable. Where applied, it proved successful in local and regional elections and, to a lesser extent, European elections. However, parity had a much weaker impact at the national level, with poor performances in the Senatorial elections being eclipsed by the unmitigated failure of parity in the 2002 legislative elections, on which this article focuses. The root of these differences lies in how motivated parties are to respect parity, and this varies according to the cost of defection (including the sanction for non-implementation) and the cost of compliance (such as the political or electoral cost to a party implementing parity). In the elections where parity has been successful, the relatively low political stakes have helped lower the compliance cost, whereas the defection cost has been very high, as these elections use party lists that are automatically rejected if parity is not respected. In contrast, as this article will illustrate, the legislative elections offer a much more complex cost-benefit analysis. The sanction for defection is weaker and has a variable impact from one party to another, and the costs of compliance are also far more variable. As a result, there has been considerable variation from one party to another in the extent to which they complied with parity in the legislative elections. This article accounts for this variation by explaining how each party weighed up the costs and benefits of compliance according to the options available and the values and preferences of each party. This approach can be used in similar cases where the costs and benefits of quota implementation are not clear cut in order to account for variation between parties.

Explaining the varying degrees of implementation of parity is not a straight-forward matter. First, party behaviour sometimes appears counter-intuitive. For example, in 2002, some parties respected parity even though they were opposed to it in principle [such as the far-right Front National (FN), whereas the Socialist Party (PS), who were the driving force behind the 'parity' law, fielded only 36% female candidates]. Meanwhile, the choice of the larger parties to ignore the parity law (for example, the main party of the right, the UMP, fielded <20% women) resulted in a loss of revenue equating to millions of euros per year. Accounting for these choices requires a more detailed understanding of party behaviour. Therein lies the second problem; the literature does not provide a framework that can account fully for this behaviour.

Much of the work that explores the impact of parity, although providing useful insights into contextual variables and women's perspectives, does not take into account the perspective of political parties. Even works that do discuss parties tend to portray them as resistant to parity without explicitly theorising this resistance.³ Parties are simply

portrayed as being run by self-interested men who do not wish to make space for women. While this conclusion is not necessarily false, it is somewhat simplistic and fails to take into account of the numerous and diverse decisions that must be made before deciding whether or not to implement parity. Moreover, there is no systematic explanation of why the selection of candidates might be affected by parity in different ways according to the party and election in question. I argue that both explaining why parties have responded to parity in their chosen fashion and predicting how parties might behave under different circumstances are essential requirements when considering any modifications to the law to make it more effective, or any transfer of compulsory quotas to a different polity or social category.

This article will address these needs through exploring the underlying motives of political parties in deciding how many women candidates to select. In doing so, I use three core theories of party behaviour, drawn from the literature on political parties, to help illuminate the choices and motivations of French parties faced with parity. These theories include the competition, institutional and ideological approaches. The electoral competition approach explores the idea that parties might rationally select the candidate that is the most electable, irrespective of parity. The institutional approach helps to demonstrate how institutional variables can frame the range of options available to parties. Finally, the ideological approach explores the role of ideology in motivating certain parties to support parity even if it conflicts with other interests. Each theory is explored in greater detail in the sections below.

Although each of these theories is of use in explaining party behaviour, it will be demonstrated that none is sufficient to account for all the variation between political parties. This article therefore aims to explore deeper, and argues that parties face a range of conflicting options when selecting their electoral candidates. Various theoretical approaches help to frame the range of choices available, but do not explain why, in similar situations, different parties will make different choices. It is hypothesised that parties seek to act rationally according to their overall motivations, and that if these motivations are known then overall party strategy will be predictable. A theoretical model is then offered, which builds on the strengths of the other approaches discussed in the article and seeks to account for variations between parties. The model demonstrates both the range of choices available to parties and the order in which parties will prioritise between these choices, dependent on their circumstances.

The electoral competition approach

For the purpose of this article, electoral competition theory is based on the Downsian principle that parties are rational actors who prioritise the pursuit of electoral office over all else.⁴ Thus, parties will be

prepared to sacrifice ideology and any other factors that might impede them from achieving their ultimate goal of winning as many votes and seats as possible. Within the context of parity, this logic would dictate that parties would favour the candidate that they perceived to be the most electable, irrespective of other factors. Thus, if the most electable candidates happened to be male, and parties were faced with the prospect of sacrificing a portion of their state funding in order to continue fielding the most electable candidates rather than the required 50% women, this theory implies that parties would be prepared to make that sacrifice. Of course, not all parties are necessarily motivated by electoral competition above all else. Some parties in France are still primarily concerned with other priorities such as ideological coherence (which will be explored below). However, the parties in France that have had the most significant impact on women's presence in politics are the large parties that are concerned above all with maximising their electoral appeal. With low levels of party membership, broad socio-economic bases and convergent policies, the centre-right UMP party and centre-left PS party can be categorised as 'electoral-professional' parties.⁵ France's history of alternating between the right and the left at each election demonstrates the relatively low level of core support for the major parties, and hence their need to make themselves as electable as possible.

If one adopts the premise that parties are primarily motivated by electoral success, it does not follow automatically that this goal is incompatible with the implementation of parity. Conflicts of interests occur only if women candidates are regarded to be electorally disadvantageous. This could result either from a systematic belief that women were less electable than men, or a series of decisions made on a seat-by-seat basis that concluded, more often than not, that the best available candidate was a man. There is some evidence to suggest that parties do perceive women as being an electoral liability, especially if the selection of a woman requires the de-selection of a male incumbent. Incumbency is a particular barrier to the implementation of parity, with parties placing a huge premium on their (predominantly male) incumbents. As recently as 2006, a party official from the UMP headquarters claimed that 'we would probably have lost the elections [in 2002] if we had fielded unknown women in half the constituencies. We still prefer to pay fines than lose elections!' (*Le Figaro* 6 January 2006). This echoes opinions expressed around the time of the 2002 election by senior members of the UMP (*L'Express* 16 August 2002; *Le Monde* 10 May 2002), all based on the premise that female candidates were less good than their male counterparts. While the PS has been less vocal in denouncing female candidates (indeed, it has elected to respect a parity of candidatures at the 2007 elections), it has still been very reluctant to see incumbents de-selected in the name of parity. For the 2002 elections, de-selecting incumbents was not considered an

option; for 2007, incumbents risked de-selection only when they were aged over 70 or if they were out of political favour (as Laurent Fabius claimed was the case for members of his faction). It is possible that this reluctance to de-select incumbents is borne out of the desire to maintain party unity and avoid rebellion by the disaffected men who are forcibly evicted from their seats. This possibility is considered in more detail below. At this stage, however, let us assume that the fear of electoral penalties expressed by the UMP is the driving motivation behind prioritising male candidates, especially where they are incumbents.

To test whether parties are indeed prioritising the best candidates, I conducted a longitudinal study of electoral performance that separated the effects of seats and candidates to allow an objective measurement of the performance of men versus women, and incumbents versus non-incumbents.⁶ The findings refuted the suggestion that women are an electoral liability compared with men, with no significant difference between the average performance of men and women after controlling for seat effects. The findings regarding the performance of incumbents are rather less conclusive. The study revealed that, overall, incumbents appeared to benefit from a slight electoral advantage over 'inheritors' (new candidates replacing retiring incumbents).⁷ However, this was not consistently the case—incumbents performed better than inheritors under the right-wing victories of 1993 and 2002, but actually performed less well under the left-wing victory of 1997. Furthermore, incumbency was not found to be a predictor of electoral performance in 2002, suggesting that incumbents did not perform any better than their seats and overall party performance would predict. Incumbency was actually associated negatively with electoral performance in the 1997 election, although the heavy losses sustained by the Right in 1997 following their unusually large victory in 1993 suggest that the 1997 results may be more attributable to party effects than to incumbency effects.⁸ However, while not providing definite proof that incumbents enjoy an electoral advantage, the results did demonstrate that, in 1993 and 2002, incumbents were more likely than inheritors to win their seat. This suggests a slight, although inconsistent, electoral advantage for incumbents which is certainly less conclusive than parties have claimed, but nonetheless provides some justification for parties in their prioritisation of incumbents. If parties are focused on winning elections as their primary strategy, then even a slight and uncertain advantage will be appealing, particularly given the volatility of the French electorate and the high number of swing seats. Only the safest seats might be considered immune from the potentially negative effects of deselecting an incumbent, and these seats might pose a different kind of problem for parties. First, a powerful incumbent that was displaced in favour of a woman might choose to stand against his party as an independent and hence impose a different type of electoral cost upon the party.⁹ This proved to be the case in several constituencies in the 2007

elections. Secondly, the removal of a popular incumbent might alienate local party supporters, which could be costly to a party in a number of ways (such as losing votes, reducing turnout amongst the party faithful and losing volunteers to run the local campaign), all of which would provide an electoral incentive to maintain the status quo.

If it is assumed that electorally motivated parties will not be opposed to fielding women per se, but will not be prepared to deselect incumbents, it then follows that the only way to implement parity would be through fielding women in seats where there is no incumbent. For the most part, these would be seats in which the party has a poor electoral history (this finding is confirmed by the results of the study, which demonstrate that parties consistently place women in the most difficult seats). This explains the gulf between the percentage of women candidates and the much lower percentage of women actually elected. If no incumbents are deselected, then the only seats where women might hope to win would be those where the incumbent did not seek re-election, and those where the party won back a seat lost in a previous election. However, it is also problematic for parties who protect incumbents to focus on implementing parity through allowing all new opportunities (such as a seat in which the incumbent retired, or a seat lost at the last election and likely to be regained at the next one) to be reserved for women. Such a move would be made at the expense of the up-and-coming generation of young male hopefuls, who would risk being overlooked. Men in the PS have already complained that they are becoming a 'sacrificed generation' (*Le Monde*, 5 February 2006). To avoid dissent and maximise their pool of talent, parties feel the need to reserve some new opportunities for men as well as keeping the men already in power. The consequence is that parity becomes even harder to achieve.

The electoral competition approach is insightful in explaining why rational parties might not implement parity. However, it does not explain why some parties still do choose to implement parity, nor does it explain why the PS, who came into the 2002 election with more incumbents than the UMP, still succeeded in fielding more female candidates than their right-wing counterparts. It is therefore necessary to consider the electoral competition approach in conjunction with other approaches to party behaviour, starting with the institutional approach.

The institutional approach

The 'institutional' approach is defined here as arguing that the choices that parties face when selecting candidates are framed by the institutional environment. I consider how certain institutional variables might shape the options available to each party and hence influence their decision on whether or not to implement parity. As will be demonstrated below, these variables do not affect all parties equally,

and leave certain parties with far more room for manoeuvre than others. For those parties that are heavily constrained by institutional factors, the institutional approach is a powerful explanatory tool in demonstrating why these parties do or do not implement parity. However, for those parties that are left with a variety of choices, this approach can only indicate the choice set available to a party without explaining how parties will prioritise between these choices.

Although the exact definition of what constitutes an institution is disputed within the literature, an institution will be defined here as being, first, a feature of the political system within which parties operate and, secondly, of direct relevance to candidate selection. As such, 'institutions' to be considered within this paper are the electoral system, the parity legislation and the party system. The particular impact of each will be considered, before evaluating how their combined effect will influence parties.

The electoral system frames party choices in different ways depending on the type of election in question. For local, regional and European elections, plus for some constituencies in the senatorial elections, France uses a proportional electoral system. Proportional systems have widely been identified in the literature as being more favourable to women than majoritarian systems,¹⁰ because they reduce the emphasis on individual candidates and on incumbents, and increase the desirability of a gender-balanced ticket. This effect is enhanced by the parity legislation, which is constraining under proportional electoral systems, because party lists are rejected unless they comply with the requirement of parity. Therefore, parties have little choice but to implement parity in these elections. Their only room for manoeuvre is in the placement of women on the list, and even this is restricted by the legislation (varying from one woman in every two candidates to three women in every six candidates depending on the district size). While parties might not wish to respect parity in these elections, especially where it entails a cost to the party (such as the defection of a lower-placed candidate to another list), they effectively have no choice but to comply.

In contrast, some elections—the remaining senatorial constituencies, departmental elections and legislative elections—are held using a majoritarian electoral system. In addition to the other disadvantages to women of this electoral system, it also makes parity difficult to apply, and the legislative elections are the only majoritarian elections addressed by the parity law. As there are no party lists, the chosen method of implementation is through a financial penalty for fielding <50% candidates of either sex at the national aggregate. However, this requirement does not limit the choices available to all parties to an equal extent. This is because of the way that the financial penalty is applied. In France, parties are financed by the state and the amount of money allocated to each party comprises two distinct portions.

The first is linked to how many votes a party receives, and the second is linked to how many seats a party wins. The penalty for failing to implement parity applies exclusively to this first portion, and is calculated in proportion to how far a party is from achieving parity. For example, a 55:45 men to women ratio will result in a 5% loss of funding. Small parties that expect to win few or no seats will be dependent on the first portion of state funding, and will be heavily affected by any significant deductions to their funding. Hence, the law acts as an effective constraint on small parties. In contrast, large parties receive the bulk of their income from the second portion of funding, and will be more concerned with winning seats than with implementing parity. Any losses made from failing to implement parity can be offset if sufficient seats are won. Parties who are rich enough can therefore afford to side-step the law, whereas poorer parties cannot.

That is not to say that larger parties are indifferent to the effects of the financial penalty. In the 2002–7 parliament, the PS lost more than 1.5 million euros per year, while the loss to the UMP's coffers stood at nearly 4 million euros a year—a huge sum by any standards, and 10% of their budget.¹¹ So why would parties be prepared to sacrifice so much of their funds? Electoral motivations have already been considered in the first section, but another important factor must be considered here, namely the need to maintain party unity within an unstable and fragmented party system.

France has a relatively large and complex party system, sometimes referred to as 'bipolar multipartism' due in part to the nature of the electoral system, which is held over two rounds and thus invites second-round stand-offs between the left and right. There are two constant themes that run through any analysis of France's party system: change and competition. French parties are in almost perpetual flux, with frequent splintering, re-formations, renaming and regrouping. There is a large emphasis on personality, due in part to the effects of presidentialisation, and large personalities who do not feel sufficiently accommodated within a party might go off and form their own party. France also has a large number of smaller parties that share a relatively close ideological space, resulting in wide voter choice in the first round of legislative elections. A significant split in the vote between parties close to each other in the ideological spectrum could result in none of these parties qualifying to the second round of the election. As a result, parties are unlikely to wish to rock the boat or to do anything that might split their party or their vote. This is another reason why parties might be reluctant to deselect incumbents, particularly if these incumbents have their own power bases independent of the party.

An additional side-effect of the party system is that parties on the left and right sometimes enter electoral coalitions, designed to concentrate their vote and hence strengthen their chances of success. When bargaining with coalition partners as to which seats should be reserved

for which parties, an emphasis is once again placed on incumbents. A party fielding an incumbent is much more likely to be able to place a claim on a winnable seat. Conversely, parties find it easier to field women in seats where there is no incumbent, and these seats are more likely to be offered to other parties during negotiations. For example, the 40% of female candidates originally agreed by the PS for 2002 fell down to 36% after negotiations with coalition partners.

Thus, smaller parties are more constrained by the financial imperative to implement parity, whereas larger parties are more constrained by incumbents and the need to keep voters, party members and coalition partners satisfied. Institutional variables do have a significant effect on the range of choices available to different parties. However, they still do not explain why there are such differences between parties with seemingly similar circumstances—for example, why the PS and the UMP, both large parties motivated by electoral success, would have implemented parity to such different degrees. The third theory to be looked at seeks to answer this question.

The ideological approach

So far this paper has focused on reasons why a party might not wish to implement parity, or why it might be forced to do so against its will. What it has not yet considered is why parties might actually *choose* to implement parity, even where they can afford not to. I argue that a party's ideological stance is key in understanding why some parties are prepared to make sacrifices in order to implement parity. Given the suggestion that parity entails a certain sacrifice, as men will have to stand down to be replaced by women, I argue that several conditions need to be met in order for ideology to triumph over the other variables that have been considered in the first two approaches. First, parties need to demonstrate ideological support for the principle of gender equality. Secondly, they need to agree that state intervention—in this case, the parity law—is an appropriate means of addressing gender inequality. Thirdly, their ideological support for parity needs to be sufficiently strong for it to be prioritised over other variables, even if this entails certain costs. So it could be expected that parties of the left might be somewhat more enthusiastic in their application of parity than parties of the right. However, it does not necessarily follow that parties who do not implement parity do not agree with gender equality, as they may believe that parity is not the appropriate means of achieving this, or they might not consider it an important enough issue to over-ride other concerns.

The second condition stated above is that parties agree with state intervention as a means of achieving the goal of gender equality. Again, this is a trait generally associated with parties of the left. The main opposition to parity from the right was not due to the rejection of the principle of gender equality, but rather to using legal

enforcement to achieve it. Ideological opponents argued that citizenship should not be explicitly gendered, and that women should only be selected on the grounds of merit and not in order to fulfil a quota. Thus, parties that favoured gender equality in principle might still not be motivated by their ideology to implement parity in practice, unless they believed that it was the appropriate solution to the problem of women's under-representation.

Finally, strength of beliefs are also important, as a party that agrees with parity both in theory and in practice might still not implement it if parity were a lower priority to the party than other imperatives such as electoral performance or party stability. Hence, ideology can only be seen as a positive predictor of parity's implementation if it is sufficiently important to a party to over-ride other concerns.

Thus, parties might be ideologically motivated to implement parity in spite of the sacrifices that they will entail to do so, but only if they meet the three conditions outlined above. The reverse is not necessarily true, however; ideological opposition to parity is not necessarily a negative predictor of parity's implementation. That is to say, it cannot be assumed that a party that is ideologically *opposed* to gender equality will consequently refuse to implement parity. A good example of this is the far-right FN party, which was open in its opposition to the parity law at the time of its passage, and yet went on to field 48.5% women in 2002.¹² The reason for this is that failure to implement parity also entails sacrifices, namely a loss of funding and a bad reputation. A party that does not agree with parity might therefore still choose to respect the law.

It can be argued, then, that ideology may have a significant positive effect on the implementation of parity provided the necessary conditions are met, but that ideology is unlikely to have a significant negative effect. Rather, in the cases where ideology does not succeed in having a positive effect, it is likely to have no effect at all, as it will not figure prominently in the calculations made by parties when deciding which candidates to field.

Evaluation of the three approaches

Each of the theoretical approaches discussed above has provided some useful insights into the competing choices and priorities that parties face when selecting their electoral candidates. Institutional variables provide a framework of options for parties to choose from, but do not account sufficiently for how parties choose between these options and why different parties favour different options. Meanwhile, the electoral and ideological approaches go some way towards providing an explanation of party priorities, but their explanatory power is incomplete when each is considered in isolation from the other two approaches. The electoral competition approach demonstrates why parties might seek to avoid deselection of incumbents in order to field more women,

but does not explain why, for example, the UMP fielded fewer women than the PS in 2002 even though it had fewer incumbents. The ideological approach demonstrates why parties might be prepared to implement parity even if doing so goes against their other interests, but does not consider how ideology interacts with other priorities, nor does it account for the behaviour of parties that are not ideologically motivated to implement parity.

Synthesising the approaches: a new model

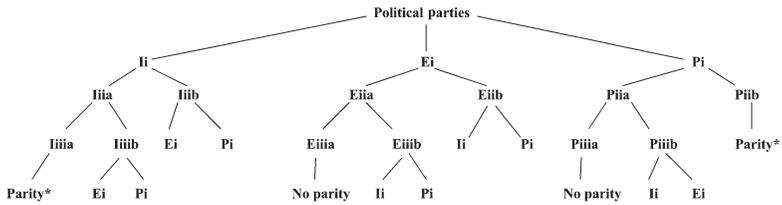
Although each of the theoretical approaches is useful, none is complete when considered independently from the other two. This final section of the paper introduces a synthesised model that draws on the strengths of the above approaches and uses them to predict how different parties will react to parity dependent on their circumstances.

The model is based on the premise that there are three overarching priorities that parties face when selecting electoral candidates, namely electoral motivations, ideological motivations and party motivations. The first two priorities correspond largely to the models explored above; the third is based on the impact that institutional factors have on shaping party choices. The model incorporates the core decisions that a party faces when deciding whether or not to implement parity, and the priorities indicate the order in which parties will make these core decisions, depending on how important each priority is to the party in question.

Each party will begin with their top priority (see below for a discussion of what different parties might prioritise), and then make choices depending on whether or not parity is compatible with its needs within this category. In each of the three categories, two types of scenario are ultimately possible, either a conclusive decision is made, based on the necessity or impossibility of implementing parity, or the effect of parity is not considered significant enough to be decisive, in which case parties will move on to evaluating parity within their second area of priority. Parties will continue to move through the options until they have reached a decisive result. In the event that they do not come to a decisive result after exploring the options in all three categories, it is assumed that their position is neutral. In this scenario, they would implement parity in order to avoid an unnecessary financial cost.

The level of decision may also vary. For some stages of the model, the outcome may have a blanket effect for the entire selection process; for other stages, the decision must be made on a seat-by-seat basis. The two outcomes in the model whereby parity is an imperative are both blanket decisions; they would need to be implemented as an overarching strategy for candidate selection. In contrast, decisions on whether or not a female candidate would be as electable as her male alternative, or on whether choosing one candidate over another might create dissent within the party, are both dependent on the individual

Figure 1. Model of party priorities when deciding whether to implement parity



- Key*
- Ii Ideological motivations
 - Iii Is the party pro-parity? (a, yes; b, no)
 - Iiia Does ideology over-ride all other factors? (a, yes; b, no)
 - Ei Electoral motivations
 - Eii Would a female candidate be less electable than the male candidate that would otherwise be fielded (e.g. the incumbent)? (a, yes; b, no)
 - Eiii Does the electoral cost of implementing parity exceed the financial cost of not implementing it? (a, yes; b, no)
 - Pi Party motivations
 - Pii Can the party bear the financial penalty for not implementing parity? (a, yes; b, no)
 - Piia Does the cost to the party (e.g. through party unity, appeasing internal factions, satisfying the party faithful, risking defections etc.) of enforcing parity exceed the financial cost of not implementing it? (a, yes; b, no)
- * Decision has a blanket effect across all seats

circumstances within each constituency, and thus must be made on a piecemeal basis. For parties that have an overarching imperative to implement parity, the model might still be used to decide in which seats parity should be implemented (Figure 1).

Two additional things are of note. First, for parties with weak but positive levels of support for parity, ideology may not be sufficient to have an overarching effect and may be overridden in seats where other variables have a strong influence, but may be decisive in seats where all the options in the other two categories have been played out and have not led to a decisive conclusion. Overall, degree and direction of ideological support for parity might influence the level of cost that parties are prepared to tolerate in order to implement parity; a higher level of cost might be supported by a party that agreed with parity in principle than a party that did not.

Secondly, it should be noted that a verdict of 'no parity' does not equate to a party fielding no women at all. Rather, it means that in those seats where this is the outcome, parties will not introduce a female candidate at the expense of a male one. Given that the 'no parity' verdict is only applicable on a seat-by-seat basis rather than across the board, and given the expectation that at least some seats will result in a neutral conclusion that allows parity, especially in those seats already being represented by women, it can be assumed that all parties will field at least some women. Indeed, it is assumed that in seats where the favoured candidate is a woman, the model will not be applied as there is no conflict of interest.

How does this model work when applied to political parties? First, I argue that different types of party will follow the model in different ways. Secondly, I demonstrate how French parties actually behave. When considering how different parties will progress through the

model, I categorise parties into three main types based on their dominant characteristics. Parties often possess more than one of the traits contained in the categories below, and this is reflected in their secondary decisions when following the model, but the categories below indicate the dominant features of party and hence the initial direction of their trajectory through the model.

TYPE 1: PARTIES THAT HAVE STRONG IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS. All parties that are defined primarily by a clear ideological stance will begin with Ii. Those that are in favour of parity should reach a decisive outcome by selecting Iiiia (parity); those that are not in favour will proceed to other categories in accordance with their secondary priorities.

TYPE 2: ELECTORAL–PROFESSIONAL PARTIES. Electoral–professional parties are electorally motivated above all else, so will begin with Ei. Their progress through E will be determined on a seat-by-seat basis. For seats that do not provide a decisive outcome, parties will then proceed to Pi. It is assumed that electoral–professional parties will be large enough to tolerate the financial penalty for ignoring parity, and that they will therefore proceed to Pii. In all seats where the cost of implementing parity is high enough to be decisive, parity will not be implemented. In seats that do not incur a significant cost in either E or P, parity will be implemented.

TYPE 3: VULNERABLE PARTIES. Parties may be vulnerable in one or both of two ways. First, they may be financially vulnerable due to their small size. Parties in this category will be expected to follow a simple path of Pi \Rightarrow Piiib (parity). Secondly, parties may suffer from weak internal unity. In this scenario, they would also be expected to start with Pi, and might be more likely than other parties to conclude with Piiia (no parity).

How would the model apply to French political parties? Let us consider the cases of each of the parties studied in turn.

PCF: As an ideological party with a long history and some electoral presence, the Communist Party (PCF) could be classed under type 1, so would begin with Ii (ideology). The PCF is pro-parity but not to the extent that this over-rides all other factors. This suggests that they would therefore proceed to other categories, but prioritise parity in all scenarios where the cost of parity was not overbearingly high. Although the PCF is fairly stable, it is a party in decline, which means that there are usually more incumbents and former incumbents than there are safe seats available. This results in high competition for winnable seats, meaning that party motivations (P) would come into play

in these seats, with Piiia (no parity) being the probable outcome. For the remainder of seats, implementing parity should be relatively low-cost and desirable.

PS: The PS is primarily an electoral–professional party, and as such would be classed as a type 2 party despite its ideological support for parity. The PS would therefore be expected to begin with Ei and work its way through E and then P. Like the Communists, the PS would be expected to implement parity wherever possible. However, more seats would be expected to reach the decisive, negative outcomes of Eiiia and Piiia (no parity) due to the greater priority accorded to electoral success and the higher number of incumbents.

Verts: The Verts (Greens) are the best example of a party that follows the type 1 party trajectory. As a relatively young, ideological party with few incumbents, they would be expected to begin with Ii. As strong supporters of parity, they are then expected to proceed to Iiia (parity) and enforce this across the board. Where problems are encountered due to individual seats that have prioritised Eiiia or Piiia outcomes (for example due to the presence of a male incumbent), the Verts would be expected to use other seats to compensate so that parity overall is achieved.

UDF: The centre-right UDF are vulnerable due to their changing status and the loss of a considerable portion of their party to the UMP.¹³ As such, they would be classed as a type 3 party, and be expected to begin with Pi. Being a cadre party with sufficient financial resources, they would be expected to skip Pii and focus their decisions on Piii and then on E. Given their ideological indifference to parity, this would not be a motivating factor for them. It would therefore be quite easy for the party and electoral costs of implementing parity to exceed the financial penalty for ignoring it, and with no ideological support for parity to mitigate these costs, a high number of Piiia and Eiiia (no parity) scenarios would be expected.

UMP: Like the PS, the UMP is an electoral–professional party that would be classed as type 2. However, it differs from the PS in two regards. First, it does not have ideological support for parity, so might be more likely than the PS to consider the cost of implementing parity to outweigh the benefits. Secondly, as a recently formed umbrella party, it is arguably more vulnerable to P factors than the PS. Hence, its trajectory would be expected to be fairly similar to that of the PS, but with a higher number of Piiia and Eiiia (no parity) outcomes.

FN: The FN is a classic example of the first kind of type 3 party, namely a party that is vulnerable due to its small size and hence its financial dependence on the first portion of state funding. Hence, it would be expected to proceed directly to Piib (parity).

How does this theory translate into practice? The actual implementation of parity in 2002 and 2007 is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Implementation of parity

Party	Percentage of Women Candidates in 2002	Percentage of Women Elected in 2002	Percentage of Women Candidates in 2007	Percentage of Women Elected in 2007
PCF	43.6	18.2	46.5	16.7
PS	34.6	16.2	45.5 ^b	26
Verts	48.9	33.3 ^a	50.4	25
UDF ³	19.9	6.9	27.9	0
MoDem ^a	n/a	n/a	36.9	0
UMP	19.6	10.7	26.5	14.2
FN	48.4	0 ^c	48.8	0 ^d

Sources: Zimmerman (2003), Zimmerman (2007)¹⁴, *Le Monde* and www.assemblee-nationale.fr

^aAs the Verts only won three seats, 33.3% (1 seat out of 3) was as close to parity as they could get.

^bThis figure is the combined figure for an alliance of candidates put forward by the PS and two left-wing coalition partners (MRC and PRG). The actual PS figure was closer to 48%.

^cThe 2002 figures are for the UDF, which was then a single party. The 2007 UDF figures are for the section of the UDF that chose to align itself with the presidential majority (aka the Nouveau Centre). The 2007 MoDem figures are for the other party that emerged from the UDF under its former leader, François Bayrou.

^dThe FN did not win any seats in 2002 or 2007.

The practice of parity broadly confirms the theory. The PCF is close to achieving a parity of candidates (and would be closer still if its candidate selection were more centralised¹⁵), but it is not prepared to make as much room for women in the seats that matter. The PS came less close than the PCF to parity in 2002, and problems of incumbency combined with internal divisions have made parity harder for this party to achieve, although they made good progress in 2007. The Verts and the FN are, as predicted, the two parties closest to achieving parity, although for very different reasons. Meanwhile, the UDF has struggled to achieve parity, especially in terms of seats, as has the UMP. Indeed, even the low proportion of women elected in 2002 exceeded expectations by the UMP; many of these women were in difficult seats that would not have been won had the UMP not enjoyed such a landslide victory following the controversial presidential elections two months earlier.¹⁶ Meanwhile, of the 18 deputies elected by the two parties stemming from the UDF in 2007, not one was a woman. The factors that stifled the numbers of UDF women in 2002 were exaggerated by the crisis generated by the party's split following the presidential elections in 2007. In sum, although it is not possible to prove with certainty that the model is a perfect predictor of party behaviour, both the outcomes of parity and the reasons for achieving those outcomes appear congruent with the theory.

Overall, this model serves several purposes. First, it is a heuristic tool to illuminate the processes that parties go through when evaluating

whether or not to implement parity, and how and why these processes vary from party to party. Secondly, it demonstrates how lower level decisions will interact to produce overall results. Finally, and crucially, the model can be adapted to be applicable to any other scenario in which parties have to evaluate competing costs when selecting candidates and implementing quotas. For example, parties within or beyond France might use a similar process to decide whether or not to increase their proportion of BME electoral candidates, even though the associated costs would be different to those specified within this particular application of the model. The weight of the variables will vary depending on the circumstances under which the model is applied, leading to an altered probability of different outcomes. Nonetheless, the order in which decisions are taken should remain unaltered. It should therefore be possible to estimate, given sufficient knowledge of the costs associated with different outcomes and the principle characteristics of the parties involved, how they will react to other types of compulsory quota. By providing insight into how different parties evaluate situations and how those evaluations translate into outcomes, the model also explains how similar situations can produce different outcomes depending on the party in question.

This article has examined the impact of compulsory quotas from the perspective of political parties, focusing on the case study of the 'parity' law in France. In doing so, it has explored the utility of some traditional approaches to the study of political parties in explaining why parties might or might not implement parity. Although each of these approaches is useful, none is sufficient in itself to explain why different parties made different choices, even under similar conditions. I have therefore introduced a new model that combines the strengths of the three approaches to provide a more complete account of parity within the candidate selection process. The model demonstrates both how the choices available to each party will be framed, and also how different parties will prioritise between the choices available. The model helps simplify the complexity of the decision-making process and makes outcomes more predictable. This, in turn, will make it easier for practitioners to assess the potential impact of any amendments to the existing law, or of the introduction of a comparable quota in France or elsewhere.

- 1 Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2006 PSA and MPSA conferences, seminars at Goldsmiths and Sussex and at the ECPR graduate conference. I would like to thank all those who provided comments and feedback. Particular thanks to Joni Lovenduski, Rosie Campbell, Katherine Opello, Robin Pettitt and the anonymous referees for their feedback. Any errors that remain are mine.
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- 12 Zimmerman 2003, op cit.
- 13 By the time of the 2007 elections, the UDF had effectively split into two new parties, one allied to the UMP and one formed by the former leader of the UDF, François Bayrou, named Mouvement Démocrat or MoDem. This article refers primarily to the UDF pre-2007.
- 14 M. Zimmerman, *Elections Legislatives 2007: Resultats des épreuves paritaires*, press release by the Observatoire de la parité, May 2007.
- 15 Although parties are considered here as unitary actors, internal interests within each party will sometimes conflict, and more centralised parties have tighter control over their candidate selection procedures than parties with greater internal democracy.
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