Breaking the Cycle of Gender Exclusion in Political Party Development

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Summary

Political parties around the world face a crisis in public confidence. Many citizens view them as inaccessible and unresponsive to their concerns. Parties pose specific challenges for women, who face both formal and informal barriers to participation, including opaque nomination procedures, violence, and parties with hypermasculine cultures.

The formation of new parties during periods of political transition represents a potential opportunity to break these patterns. Transitions can be openings to transform the broader political, legal, and social barriers to an inclusive kind of politics. In these moments of flux, the development of new party branches and rules, as well as the renegotiation of broader institutional frameworks, can enable women and other marginalized groups to push for greater political representation within party structures.

What factors influence the level of gender inclusion in processes of party development? This question is central for policymakers, advocates, and practitioners seeking to support inclusive democracy and gender equality in transitional societies and beyond. To shed light on this topic, this study investigates gender inclusion in three types of party formation that commonly unfold during political transitions:

- a social movement to a party (as exemplified by Ennahda in Tunisia),
- an armed movement to a party (as illustrated by the African National Congress [ANC] in South Africa), and
- a dominant party to a breakaway party (as shown by the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès [MPP] in Burkina Faso).

For each of these three cases, the study examines how the origins and characteristics of these parties and their respective transition contexts influence the degree of gender inclusion these parties exhibit. Insights from Bolivia, Nepal, and Uganda expand the analysis to additional regions.

Drivers and Patterns of Gender Inclusion

Party origins and characteristics

- **Leadership commitment:** Parties' origins shaped how receptive male party leaders were to demands for inclusion; previous ideological commitments to equality and social justice made it easier for women within such parties or in civil society to push for quotas or other mechanisms to ensure their representation.

- **Women's participation:** Parties' origins also influenced whether there were pools of female members or supporters who were ready to step forward as political candidates and whether nascent parties included female leaders who had the networks, legitimacy, and influence necessary to take on leadership roles and lobby male party leaders.

- **Structures for advocacy:** An important factor shaping women's influence in nascent parties was the strength of women's autonomous mobilization in preparty organizations, as well as whether they had articulated joint demands on the organizations' leadership prior to political transitions. In Bolivia and South Africa, for example, the internal structures of political movements enabled women to share their experiences and articulate joint demands in the lead-up to party formation. These structures gradually embraced more explicitly feminist stances, drawing on exchanges with women's civil society groups.

Transition characteristics

- **Nature of the transitions:** Long and inclusive transition processes aimed at fundamentally renegotiating existing political orders—through a new constitution or new foundational laws— were more conducive to gender inclusion, as they enabled women in political parties and in civil society to build alliances and push for specific legal reforms and political commitments, including national or party-level quotas.

- **Women's broad-based mobilization:** The existence of organized and broad-based women's movements was key for pushing political parties to make gender equality commitments. In Bolivia, Nepal, South Africa, and Tunisia, coordinated action among women's groups allowed them to exert pressure on male party leaders, ensured that women were present in the bodies designing electoral and party rules, and boosted these women's capacity and influence. Coalition building between women in civil society and women politicians proved particularly impactful.

- **Women at the table:** Including women with strong links to feminist groups and organizations in formal transition and constitutional negotiations helped ensure that gender equality commitments and parity measures remained on parties' political agendas and were anchored in constitutional commitments, new electoral codes, or party bylaws.

Lasting barriers

- **Male leadership dominance continues:** Across the different political organizations examined in this analysis, men were overrepresented in leadership positions before, during, and after party formation, even though women's mobilization was often central in bringing about the

political openings that sparked such party formation processes. Even in nascent parties with higher levels of gender inclusion, such as the ANC in South Africa, women had to organize against the constant threat of marginalization.

- **Gender norms change slowly:** Institutional and legislative change did not necessarily spur shifts in organizational culture or gender norms within nascent parties. Even as parties adopted internal gender equality mechanisms or complied with legislated quotas, women still struggled against discriminatory attitudes and behavior, as well as threats and intimidation, aimed at preserving male-dominated power structures.

- **Structural barriers persist:** Entrenched hurdles to women's political engagement, such as an unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities and financial resources, do not change over-night. While women in political parties and in civil society have made progress in advocating for quotas and gender equality commitments, they have been less successful in pushing for party support to address these structural inequities.

Recommendations for Gender-Sensitive Party Support in Transition Contexts

To support gender inclusion within newly formed political parties during and following political transitions, international assistance providers should:

- **Begin with gendered political economy analysis.** Understanding transition contexts and their gender characteristics is critical for identifying entry points for gender-sensitive party support. Such analyses should investigate the causes, depth, and length of political transitions, as well as the wider political-economic and sociocultural contexts. These analyses should explicitly examine how gender shapes access to power and resources, and they should be informed by the views of a diverse range of women.

- **Conduct gender and inclusion assessments of political parties.** Political transitions give rise to parties with different origins and organizational characteristics. As a result, cookie-cutter approaches will not work. It is necessary to conduct gender and inclusion assessments to identi-fy how formal and informal characteristics of nascent parties' root organizations—if such an organization exists in a given context—will impact early party development. These assessments should inform the design of party-specific interventions.

- **Offer pretransition support to women's groups.** Supporting cross-sectoral collaboration and movement-building efforts among women's groups and activists is important for ensuring readiness and coordination when political openings occur. Fostering exchanges and solidarity

between women's movements in similar contexts and providing technical guidance on institutional reforms such as gender quotas can help women's groups clarify their political demands before formal negotiations begin. Supporting autonomous women's organizations both financially and substantively may also contribute to making civil society more gender inclusive overall. Such support should always be rooted in and sensitive to local needs and demands.

- **Ensure gender-transformative transition support.** During transitions, international actors should support the active engagement of feminist leaders in the transitional bodies negotiating new governing structures. All technical assistance, such as support for drafting constitutions and electoral and political party rules, should include guidance on the building of gender-sensitive institutions. Supporting the building of civil society coalitions, and networks between women's organizations and female politicians, will enable groups to exert pressure from the outside.

- **Provide targeted support for gender equality in early party development.** It is critical that parties include principles of gender equality in their foundational documents, as these commitments can provide anchors for sustained internal advocacy for inclusion. Party assistance should also support party leaders in developing plans to recruit a diverse swathe of female candidates, including for countries' first post-transition elections. In addition, any party assistance must be given with due consideration for the impact of patriarchal gender norms on women's experiences within parties and include targeted efforts to secure or deepen male party leaders' and members' commitment to gender equality and inclusion.

- **Prioritize sustained party support.** Support for gender inclusion should continue after transition processes conclude. Subsequent priorities may include the creation or strengthening of cross-party women's caucuses and coalitions, autonomous bodies for women in political parties, and party mechanisms that support greater internal inclusion. If quotas have already been adopted, such mechanisms could include sexual harassment policies or childcare support for candidates. Providing ongoing assistance focused on strengthening the civil society environment is also important for ensuring that local groups can hold nascent political parties accountable to gender-progressive commitments made during transitions.

The Puzzle of Gender Inclusion in New Political Parties

Political parties are central to democracy. They provide organized channels for citizen participation in decisionmaking and enable peaceful competition for political power. They also select candidates for political office and often decide which issues make it onto policy agendas. As a result, they can play an important role in ensuring the political inclusion of women and other marginalized groups.[1]

Gender equality in political parties also has crucial implications for democratic legitimacy and resilience. On a basic level, a democracy without the participation of half a country's population is not a democracy. Women and men are entitled to equal civil and political rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international commitments.[2] Furthermore, a growing body of evidence indicates that women's political participation can lead to tangible democratic gains, including greater policy responsiveness to diverse citizen needs, reduced risk of conflict recurrence, and higher levels of political stability.[3] Parties that take women's participation seriously can also benefit electorally by accessing new groups of voters and signaling their commitment to social change.[4]

Yet parties around the world have historically been patriarchal and exclusionary organizations. Women face both formal and informal barriers to political participation, including opaque processes for nominating candidates and parties with hypermasculine cultures. Women are often relegated to supporting roles and contend with direct resistance to their participation and leadership.[5] Some parties have made formal commitments to gender equality, but most fall short of living out such commitments or achieving a high degree of inclusion.[6]

Processes of party formation represent a potential opportunity to break these patterns. The development of party structures, constitutions, and rules can enable women and other marginalized groups to push for greater representation. Moreover, party formation often occurs in periods of mobilization and political flux, creating openings to unsettle existing power structures and bring new issues onto political agendas.

Yet the factors shaping gender equality and inclusion in early party development are poorly understood. Why do some nascent parties establish rules and norms that promote women's participation, whereas others do not? What factors impede or enable greater equality, and what are the entry points for change?

In multiparty systems, parties can form under many different conditions. Some parties originate in periods of authoritarianism, survive political liberalization, and then adapt to multiparty competition. Others form during political transitions or once multiparty competition already has been

established. This study focuses on parties formed in transitional contexts, such as following a negotiated peace settlement or the ouster of an authoritarian leader.

Such openings offer unique opportunities to transform the political, legal, and social barriers women face in politics and society.[7] For example, peace negotiations or constitutional reform processes can enable women to press for institutional commitments to electoral parity and rights protections.[8] At the same time, political transitions do not automatically facilitate greater gender equality in politics—they also can lead to women's renewed marginalization.[9] Understanding why and how nascent parties integrate or exclude women at such times is crucial for preventing patriarchal institutions and processes from returning.

Research Framework and Scope

This study focuses on three types of party formation that commonly unfold during political transitions:

- parties that emerge from nonviolent social movements,
- parties that grow from armed movements, and
- Parties that arise when dominant parties splinter.

In all three cases, the newly formed parties build on established organizations—whether they are originally social movements, armed movements, or dominant parties. These different origin stories influence the membership of nascent parties, their organizational structures and rules, and their ideological orientations—factors that, in turn, are likely to shape the opportunities for and barriers to gender inclusion in the early phase of party development.

In addition to these internal party characteristics, the transition contexts themselves also influence early party development. For example, existing research underscores that women's mobilization in civil society and participation in transitional negotiations, as well as international pressure in favor of women's participation, are crucial to ensuring that gender equality is on political parties' agendas.[10] The political contexts in which transitions unfold can also incentivize party leaders to embrace gender equality measures, so as to bolster their international legitimacy or co-opt their political rivals, for instance.[11] Lastly, some transitional processes produce legislative reforms that promote women's participation in political parties, such as mandated quotas for party candidate lists, whereas other processes further entrench their exclusion.

To examine gender inclusion in party formation in various transitional contexts, the study therefore focuses on two central questions. First, how do the *origins* of parties—specifically, the gender charac-

teristics of the entities they originate from—influence the degree of gender inclusion in early party development? Second, how do the *transition contexts* in which party formation occurs interact with these internal characteristics to shape the level of gender inclusion in nascent parties?

This study defines gender-equitable political parties as ones in which women and men participate equally in party leadership and decisionmaking, have equal chances of being nominated and elected, and influence party policies and priorities without fear of backlash or reprisal. Recognizing that few parties meet this standard, the analysis focuses on relative degrees of inclusion and highlights the barriers that inhibit women's equal participation and the enablers that help foster such participation.

To do so, the study examines the formal institutions that impact the respective statuses of men and women, such as nomination processes and quota rules, as well as informal norms and institutions, such as women's experiences of violence or harassment within parties. The research also evaluates women members' individual capacities and access to resources relative to those of men. Underpinning the analysis is the recognition that women's and men's experiences in politics are shaped not only by gender but also by other intersecting identities, such as class, ethnicity, or sexuality. Depending on the context, these identities may be more salient than gender, or they may compound gender-based discrimination.[12]

The study draws on in-depth analysis of three parties, each corresponding to one of the three main pathways of party formation:

- the Ennahda Party in Tunisia,
- the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, and
- the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès (MPP) in Burkina Faso.

Each case study examines how a given party's origins and transition context influenced gender inclusion in early party development, as well as ongoing barriers to intraparty gender equality. Shorter case studies of political parties in Bolivia, Nepal, and Uganda offer comparative insights from a wider range of additional regional contexts.

The primary cases—Ennahda, the ANC, and the MPP—were selected because of these parties' political significance (measured in terms of their electoral share over past election cycles) and the access the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace had to in-country networks that could facilitate contact with relevant party officials. The three countries where these political parties are located are also relatively stable politically, a fact that enabled greater research access. The analysis draws on an in-depth review of existing research and secondary literature as well as eighty-five semistructured interviews with male and female party

leaders, party members, and civil society representatives in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (December 2018); Tunis, Tunisia (February 2019); and Johannesburg and Pretoria, South Africa (September 2019). Research participants were identified through local research assistants or NDI offices, and they were selected to ensure variation in gender, seniority, and pre- and post-transition political roles. The authors conducted additional interviews with subject matter experts on Bolivia, Nepal, and Uganda (see the appendix for more information on the research methodology).

The study is structured around the three aforementioned pathways to party formation. Each section begins with an analytical overview of how the respective pathway interacts with gender, then presents the main case study, and ends with comparative insights from an additional case. The final section of the study summarizes the main findings from each of these pathways, as well as cross-cutting themes, and proposes recommendations for political parties, policymakers, and aid practitioners that work in transitional contexts.

Gender Inclusion in Political Parties That Evolve From Nonviolent Social Movements

Although nonviolent social movements typically do not participate in electoral politics, they sometimes institutionalize as political parties in periods of political rupture. For example, previously restricted prodemocracy movements may seize the opportunity to run in elections, as the Solidarity movement did in Poland during its democratic transition.[13] In other cases, movements or parts of movements transform into parties because they come to view this as the best strategy for advancing their goals.

For women, social movements have been a key channel for political engagement. Often broad-based and decentralized, such movements tend to have lower barriers to participation than formal political groupings, including armed organizations or political parties.[14] Women have spearheaded movements focused on gender inequities, such as the women's suffrage movement in the United States, and they have participated in movements focused on other social and political goals.[15] Although these movements often reflect and reproduce gendered social hierarchies, they can also create spaces in which traditional gender roles can be challenged.[16]

These patterns have important implications for gender inclusion in early party development. Under what conditions do women make the leap from being members of a movement to becoming party officials or politicians? The following section examines how such a transition unfolded for Ennahda in Tunisia and concludes with comparative insights from the Movement for Socialism in Bolivia.

The Ennahda Movement in Tunisia

Ennahda first emerged in Tunisia in the 1960s as a religious social movement that sought to revive Islam in Tunisian society.[17] Confronted with other sociopolitical currents of the 1970s, the movement gradually embraced a more political agenda, a development that provoked harsh repression by the secular, authoritarian Tunisian regime.[18] Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Ennahda was forced to operate underground, as most of its leaders were either imprisoned or in exile.

Following Tunisia's 2011 revolution, Ennahda's exiled leaders returned to the country, and the movement registered as a political party for the first time. It began rebuilding its structures, relying on its existing support networks. In the 2011 elections for the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), the party received 37 percent of the vote and entered into a coalition government.[19] Women's rights became a highly contentious issue in the lead-up to the elections and during the subsequent constitution-drafting process. Even prior to the revolution, Tunisia was known in the region for its progressive personal status code (which ensured gender equality in different areas of family law), high rates of female labor force participation, and an array of gender equality reforms. Many secular Tunisians feared that Ennahda's rise would threaten these gains.[20]

A closer analysis of Ennahda's track record with respect to gender inclusion reveals a more positive picture. Faced with strong civil society mobilization, party leaders supported a vertical gender parity measure, which mandated that parties alternate female and male candidates on their electoral lists. They also backed a vertical *and* horizontal parity law for municipal elections (which mandates that each list must alternate between male and female candidates *and* that parties must have the same number of male- and female-headed lists across all constituencies in which they are running).[21]

The party has been relatively successful at recruiting women to run for elections, and it has given a platform to religious and rural women who had previously been excluded from politics. Many of these women would not call themselves feminists, but they nonetheless are committed to women's empowerment. However, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions and are still rarely placed on top of Ennahda's candidate lists. They face barriers to advancement and influence that are the product of a patriarchal society and the party's conservative ideological orientation. When it comes to Ennahda's political objectives, the party is not monolithic: it encompasses moderate and traditionalist strands. While many female party members express their commitment to women's rights, the party has blocked gender equality reforms, particularly on the issue of inheritance.

Effects of Party Origins and Internal Characteristics

As part of a conservative religious movement, Ennahda members traditionally have sought to reshape gender relations along Islamic lines. Prior to the revolution, most of the movement's leaders were men. Two internal characteristics, however, helped facilitate gender inclusion during the formation of the party.

First, even though most Ennahda members advocated traditional gender roles in accordance with conservative Islam, the movement's leadership moderated its stance on these issues during the period of state repression. Second, the important informal roles that women played in Ennahda prior to the revolution increased their standing and influence within the movement during the country's political transition.

Leadership support: Although Ennahda embodied a conservative view of gender relations, its leaders entered the transition period willing to make concessions on women's rights and other doctrinal issues to demonstrate their democratic credentials.[22] This pragmatic stance was the product of a gradual evolution. In its early years, Ennahda focused on religious issues without professing a clear political doctrine. As the movement expanded, different factions emerged: progressive Islamists advocated for a reformist Islam that framed Tunisia's personal status code and other gender equality protections as compatible with religious doctrine, while a dogmatic wing with links to the Muslim Brotherhood viewed these reforms as un-Islamic Western impositions.[23]

Starting in 1989, heightened state repression pushed Ennahda's exiled leaders toward ideological moderation. Seeking to raise domestic and international support, they started focusing their demands on human rights, religious freedom, and democracy rather than political Islam.[24] For example, Ennahda's leader, Rachid Ghannouchi, began arguing publicly that Tunisia's gender-progressive personal status code could be viewed as compatible with Islamic thought.[25] These shifts did not necessarily filter down to Ennahda's base: women active in the movement at the time note that doctrinal debates about gender equality were not a priority, amid a focus on surviving harsh repression.[26] Ghannouchi's evolving stance, however, signaled increased acceptance of gender equality by the movement's leadership.

The leadership's moderation proved critical during the transition. The nascent party initially lacked clear positions on gender issues; members disagreed on the role that sharia should play in governing women's rights and politics more broadly.[27] Yet, despite the conservative orientation of many grassroots activists, Ghannouchi—the newly elected party leader—supported the rise of other pragmatists to leadership posts. Faced with pressure from civil society regarding women's rights, party leaders argued against explicit references to Islamic law in the constitution and in internal party debates.

They also emphasized the need to support gender parity measures to demonstrate the party's ideological moderation and attract new voters.[28] Ultimately, conservatives on the party's Shura Council lost these internal debates by a wide margin, setting the party on a more moderate ideological track.[29]

Women's informal roles in the movement: A second factor shaping Ennahda's stance on gender inclusion was women's participation in the movement in the pre-revolution period. When Ennahda first emerged, most of its members were men. In the late 1970s and 1980s, women members began taking on more active roles within universities, but the movement never implemented any formal mechanisms or structures to promote women's participation, and its leadership remained mostly male.[30] However, despite women's underrepresentation in leadership positions, their roles as advocates, supporters, and conduits of information became central amid state repression. Women in exile supported Ennahda prisoners and their families, while those in Tunisia kept the movement alive through their social networks.[31] They adopted new roles as their male relatives went to prison, including as liaisons with international organizations, as advocates for prisoners' rights, and as providers for their families—often at high personal cost.[32]

These sacrifices raised the profile of women within Ennahda; both women and men recognized that women had been "the guarantors of the movement" in the pre-revolution period, and the movement relied on women's clandestine networks to regroup following the departure of then president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.[33] According to one female Ennahda leader, "it was through women's resistance that the movement could come back so quickly in 2011. When men were imprisoned, it was women who had kept it alive."[34] Women's experiences with advocacy and mobilization during this period also prepared them to take on new public roles. Ahead of the 2011 elections, the party thus drew on a cadre of women with strong social ties to the movement to place on its electoral candidate lists.[35] "The period of dictatorship was a type of training for women," recalls a female Ennahda parliamentarian. "Those who had a past of activism were prepared [for the elections]."[36]

Effects of the Transition Context

Several features of Tunisia's transition pushed the party to promote women's political participation. Most notably was the adoption of a formal quota that requires *all* parties to alternate female and male candidates on their electoral lists, as well as a constitutional commitment to gender parity in all elected assemblies.

How did Tunisia's transition context shape these institutional outcomes? For one thing, Ben Ali's departure produced a significant political opening that allowed gender equality advocates to push for institutional reforms. Moreover, women's rights organizations effectively mobilized for women's political inclusion, coordinating quickly and drawing on strong coalitions with labor unions and other

parts of civil society. In addition, feminist lawyers secured representation in the transitional organs charged with designing the country's new electoral framework. Ennahda had political incentives to support their quota proposal so as to signal the party's commitment to democracy and moderation. Finally, the electoral parity rule ensured women's representation in the NCA, where many of them collaborated on institutionalizing gender equality commitments, despite challenging ideological divisions in the early transition period.

A significant political opening: Ben Ali's departure triggered a formal transition aimed at transforming Tunisia's political system rather than simply arranging a transfer of power. This reform process provided multiple opportunities for gender equality advocates to promote women's political inclusion, including the preparations for holding the country's first democratic elections and the drafting of the new constitution.

Two attributes of the process facilitated women's advocacy: the length of the transition and its relative openness to civil society. Initially planned to take only one year, the constitution-drafting process ultimately took almost three. The longer timeframe—while marked by significant instability—allowed for greater consensus building on contentious issues and gave women's organizations time to mobilize and respond to various draft provisions.[37] Moreover, throughout the transition, political actors remained sensitive to the pressure brought to bear by civil society, which they viewed as the driving force behind the country's revolutionary opening. "All of the parties wanted to be very close to civil society," notes one civic leader.[38] This openness enabled women's civic organizations to exert significant outside pressure in the tradition of Tunisia's long history of feminist activism and gender equality reforms.

Women's mobilization in civil society: Throughout the transition process, Tunisian women's groups were the primary drivers of gender inclusion, pressing for a formal rule to ensure women's participation in all transition organs and advocating for gender equality clauses in the new constitution. Their activism made it significantly more costly for parties like Ennahda to push gender equality off the agenda.

Tunisian women's organizations benefited from a long history of mobilization, as well as strong coalitions with other trade unions and human rights groups. After the revolution, influential women's organizations, such as the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, quickly formed a coalition to advocate women's participation in the transition process; they effectively argued that political parties' revolutionary legitimacy depended on their commitment to women's rights.[39] Together with newly formed women's groups, they mobilized for gender parity on parties' electoral lists ahead of the NCA elections. This mobilization helped support the feminist activists pushing for electoral parity within formal transitional bodies.

Women's groups continued pushing for gender equality commitments during the constitution-drafting process, motivated in part by fears of Islamist pushback against gender equality gains. After the NCA released the first draft of the new constitution, which included a controversial clause referencing women's and men's "complementary" rather than equal roles in the family, they organized large-scale protests and successfully pressured Ennahda to change the language in the draft. Importantly, women's groups had the backing of other parts of civil society, including influential trade unions, and of key government figures.[40]

Women's organizations also worked directly with NCA delegates. They strategically identified political allies within parties, including in Ennahda, and tried to bolster their standing in party debates by offering legal advice, giving feedback on written drafts, and convening gatherings to raise awareness on gender issues.[41] Women's activism in this period ensured that gender equality remained on the agenda of the NCA and helped foster greater engagement on gender issues even among NCA delegates who lacked a strong feminist agenda.

Women's representation in formal transitional organs: In addition to women's mobilization in Tunisian civil society, their representation in formal transitional organs was key to passing institutional reforms that committed political parties to greater gender inclusion. At the beginning of the transition process, the commission charged with devising the timetable and rules for the NCA elections included feminist experts. Ben Achour, the professor leading the commission's legal expert committee, deliberately selected several female professors with expertise on gender issues, who in turn lobbied for other feminist colleagues to be included.[42] Together, they elaborated Decree Law 2011-35, which required parties to implement gender parity on their electoral lists.

Political parties initially opposed their proposal.[43] Advocates specifically lobbied Ennahda, recognizing that having the support of Islamists would force other parties to change their positions. Despite internal disagreement, Ennahda's National Executive Bureau ultimately voted in favor of the proposal. Faced with pressure from civil society, party leaders felt that they could not say no without undermining Ennahda's image as a reform-oriented actor.[44] Additionally, with a pipeline of women to draw on for the elections, party leaders predicted that they would potentially benefit from the measure.[45] In the end, feminist activists secured a partial victory: parties accepted the vertical parity rule while still placing mostly men atop their electoral lists. Given the small number of seats per district and the fact that votes were split among several parties, male candidates thus still stood a better chance of being elected.

Despite these shortcomings, the provision ensured that women made up one-third of the NCA delegates. They held several prominent posts and actively participated in the drafting process.[46] However, intense partisan polarization between Ennahda and secular parties initially impeded

effective cross-party collaboration on gender issues in the NCA.[47] Given Ennahda's numerical strength, most of the women delegates were from within its ranks, but their views did not necessarily align with those of feminist politicians.[48] Women's rights became a particular flashpoint after the release of the first draft of the constitution, which included the controversial article referencing women's and men's "complementary" statuses. Though this clause was abandoned following widespread protests, similar disagreements emerged around the relationship between the state and Islam as framed in the new constitution.

Yet subsequent draft revisions bolstered protections for women's rights, and partisan divisions over women's rights decreased over time. In the final voting process, a group of mostly female NCA members—including many Ennahda women—came together to push for stronger language on gender equality in the constitution, including a groundbreaking article calling for gender parity in all elected bodies.[49] With the support of civil society, they underscored that gender equality and parity were natural extensions of the revolution's ideals, a position that made it difficult for parties to oppose the measure.

In the end, the constitutional clauses on gender equality passed. Several months later, the NCA also reintegrated the vertical parity provision into a new electoral law, though efforts to include horizontal parity failed. Women's representation in the NCA thus proved important to enshrining commitments to gender equality in Tunisian politics in the country's constitution and the new electoral law, thereby committing Ennahda and other parties to these principles over the long term.

Challenges in Early Party Development

Since the initial transition period, female Ennahda politicians interviewed for this study reported that they had gained greater confidence and political skills.[50] Many are proud of Ennahda's track record with respect to women's political inclusion and their participation in writing the Tunisian constitution.[51] Moreover, both moderate and conservative women in the party have come to embrace electoral quotas and use them for their own advancement.[52] At the same time, obstacles to gender inclusion in the party persist.

Entrenched patriarchal norms: Patriarchal norms still impede women's access to power within the party. The percentage of women in internal party structures has increased, but women remain underrepresented in leadership roles.[53] In early 2019, only six out of twenty-seven members of the party's political bureau were women.[54] "Women are still marginalized," a female Ennahda parliamentarian

stated. "The higher you go up, the fewer women there are."[55] Women leaders and members also experience verbal harassment and gendered attacks in the media from both political opponents and party colleagues.[56] Senior party leaders note the need to change societal attitudes to address these challenges, but they appear to dismiss the party's role in taking preventative measures.[57]

In addition, women are rarely ranked in the first slot on Ennahda's national electoral lists, which decreases their chances of being elected to parliament.[58] (Oftentimes, many candidates are competing for relatively few spots, so the odds of being elected from the first slot are far higher than being elected from lower slots.) The party has not taken any measures to address this challenge; male leaders argue that it is easier for lists headed by men to succeed, and they point to the need to "change [voters'] mentalities."[59] This problem is not unique to Ennahda. Indeed, it reflects women's experiences in most male-dominated Tunisian parties.[60] For example, parties often consider candidates' access to funds in selecting the head of their candidate list, a practice that disadvantages women since they often have fewer resources than men.[61] The 2019 elections were a case in point: the number of women in parliament decreased from 31 percent to 22 percent, despite the vertical parity rule.[62]

A mixed track record on gender reforms: Although men and women in Ennahda emphasize the party's commitment to women's rights, divisions between conservatives and moderates, the party's fears of losing its conservative base, and internal gendered hierarchies continue to muddle Ennahda's positions on gender-related policy issues. Since the transition, women in the party have worked with allies in other parties to pass certain gender-progressive bills, including a 2016 law requiring both vertical and horizontal gender parity in municipal elections, as well as a law to protect women from domestic violence and sexual harassment.[63]

Other issues, such as gender equality in Tunisia's inheritance law, have been more contentious, with Ennahda's leadership adopting a strictly conservative stance. Not all women within the party supported this position, though few have spoken out publicly.[64] Some female members have called for debating the issue openly, even as they criticized efforts by secular parties to paint them as reactionaries. Others characterize the debate over inheritance reform as an elite issue and emphasize the need to address other urgent problems facing Tunisian women, such as poverty.[65]

The case of Bolivia offers noteworthy parallels with and contrasts to the case of Tunisia when it comes to advances in gender inclusion in parties formed from social movements in periods of political transition (see box 1).

BOX 1.
Comparative Insights: The Movement for Socialism in Bolivia

The Movement for Socialism (MAS) emerged in Bolivia in the early 1990s with the aim of defending the interests of indigenous peasant unions.[66] In contrast to the rise of Ennahda, the transition of MAS into electoral politics occurred gradually: it first ran candidates in municipal elections, and its support base grew as social unrest swept the country in the early 2000s. After the movement's leader, Evo Morales, won the presidency in 2005, he called for a national Constituent Assembly (CA) to reform the country's institutions.[67]

The ascent of MAS significantly increased the participation of rural, indigenous women in Bolivian politics. The party spearheaded the adoption of a new gender-progressive constitution and a gender parity system for party lists; in 2010, Morales inaugurated the first parity cabinet. By 2014, women's representation at the national level exceeded 40 percent.[68] What factors contributed to this push for women's inclusion within MAS, and what challenges to gender equality persist?

Effects of Party Origins and Internal Characteristics

The case of MAS highlights the importance of internal pressure within the movement in driving gender inclusion. MAS emerged as a left-wing political movement that sought to empower indigenous communities.[69] The movement initially lacked clear gender equality goals; its leaders suggested that gender inequities would erode once colonial oppression was overcome.[70] The party's commitment to indigenous empowerment nevertheless meant that its leadership was open to indigenous women's demands for change. For example, Morales became the first Bolivian president to promote indigenous women to positions of leadership.[71]

Mobilization by indigenous women's organizations was central in pushing the party toward greater inclusion. Women in MAS were relatively well organized. Many (mostly male-led) indigenous organizations had parallel women-only organizations that provided a space for semi-autonomous mobilization.[72] These organizations, especially the Bartolina Sisa National Federation, played key roles in mobilizing for Morales's candidacy, though they initially did not advance explicitly feminist goals for representation.[73]

After MAS rose to power, indigenous women's organizations leveraged their positions as key allies of the new government and their significant organizational base to make more explicitly gendered demands.[74] For example, they drew on indigenous traditions of complementarity to advocate gender parity in political institutions, pressuring Morales to appoint more women to cabinet positions.[75]

They also exerted significant influence in the Pacto de Unidad, an alliance that coordinated indigenous organizations' positions during the constitutional negotiations. As a result, these broad alliances demonstrated a strong commitment to representing not only indigenous demands in general but also the specific demands of indigenous women.[76]

Effects of the Transition Context

Two additional external factors reinforced gender inclusion within MAS. First, as was the case in Tunisia, the CA convened by Morales in Bolivia provided an opening to push for institutional reforms. A gender quota ensured that women had a seat at the table during the writing of the new constitution.[77] Most parties only complied to a minimal degree, but women still comprised one-third of the delegates and made up 47 percent of MAS delegates.[78]

Second, women during and after the CA's convening mobilized across ideological, ethnic, and class lines to advance women's political inclusion.[79] Although Bolivian women had traditionally been divided between the urban, mostly mestiza, camp of feminist activists and the indigenous movement, after Morales's election, feminist groups recognized the need to overcome this divide.[80] They organized workshops throughout the country and jointly campaigned with indigenous counterparts for laws on parity and violence against women in politics.[81]

This collaboration pushed indigenous women to articulate more explicitly feminist demands while simultaneously expanding the range of socioeconomic issues feminist groups had traditionally worked on. As a result, the constitution was written in intersectional language, codifying key principles such as gender parity in legislative elections. Coalition building between feminists in civil society and feminist parliamentarians also ensured the passage of a new electoral law that operationalized this gender parity principle despite significant resistance, including within MAS.[82]

Challenges in Early Party Development

Over the course of its thirteen years in power, MAS became less responsive to grassroots demands; the numbers of women and indigenous people in high government posts declined as an ever-smaller entourage around the president and vice president amassed power.[83] Moreover, while reforms initiated during Morales's presidency increased the number of women in politics, women politicians still face high levels of violence aimed at deterring their participation and empowerment, particularly at the local level.[84] Women political figures suffer harassment, threats, and sometimes more brutal acts—as in the case of Juana Quispe. This local Bolivian councilwoman was murdered in March 2012 after refusing to resign from her mayoral seat.[85]

In response to high levels of violence, gender equality advocates lobbied for legal reform. In May 2012, following several years of advocacy and spurred to action by the murders of Quispe and a second councilwoman, Bolivia's parliament approved the groundbreaking Law Against Harassment and Political Violence Against Women. Yet, despite the MAS government's stated commitment to gender inclusion, the law has faced no shortage of implementation challenges, including the reluctance of the male-dominated judiciary to prosecute cases under the law.[86]

Gender Inclusion in Political Parties That Evolve From Armed Movements

Since the end of the Cold War, many civil wars have ended in negotiated settlements rather than outright military victories. Such peace settlements often allow armed groups to transform into political parties.[87] In other cases, insurgent movements win wars and are restructured into ruling parties, as was the case in Ethiopia and Rwanda.[88] Although women are often important participants in armed movements, their experiences in transitions from armed groups to political parties have not been systematically examined.[89]

Studies of gender in armed movements nevertheless suggest several factors that may influence gender inclusion in the party development period. First, armed movements' stated ideological commitments to women's emancipation and women's actual roles and influence within these armed groups both are likely to shape women's ability to transition into formal politics following the end of armed conflicts. Armed organizations vary significantly with respect to internal gender relations. Some groups recruit women based on gender equality commitments, establish organized women's wings, and promote women into leadership positions. Others confine them to low-level supportive roles or rely heavily on forced recruitment and coercion.[90] These dynamics shape the resources, skills, and organizational networks available to female participants in the postconflict period, as well as the commitment of male leaders and members to women's political inclusion.

Second, armed movements, even those committed to social transformation, tend to be patriarchal and male-dominated. As they become parties, these movements may retain hierarchical organizational structures and cultures that value militarized conceptions of masculinity, making it difficult for women to access power at the highest levels.[91] Research also suggests that even though the exceptional circumstances of armed struggle may disrupt traditional gender norms within armed groups for a time, women may face pressure to return to their traditional roles after conflicts end.[92] The way conflicts conclude likely affects these dynamics by, for example, reinforcing tendencies to centralize power or forcing parties to broaden their bases of support, share power with other political actors, or incorporate new constituencies.

The following section examines gender inclusion in the ANC's transformation from a liberation movement into South Africa's ruling party. It concludes with additional insights from the Maoist movement in Nepal.

The ANC in South Africa

The ANC has governed South Africa since the country's democratic transition in 1994. Founded in 1912, it began as a nonviolent movement fighting for the liberation of the country's majority population of black South Africans. Harsh repression by the apartheid regime pushed the ANC into exile, making it difficult to engage in peaceful mass action.[93] In 1961, the ANC and the South African Communist Party came together to form a military wing, known as uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), which began carrying out military operations against the apartheid government. Guerrilla warfare became one of the four pillars of the ANC's struggle, alongside international advocacy, underground political organizing, and mass mobilization.[94]

In the late 1980s, worsening economic conditions, increasing internal dissent, and a changing international landscape brought the South African apartheid government to the negotiating table.[95] In 1990, the government lifted the ban on the ANC and released senior movement leaders from prison while others returned from exile. South Africa's subsequent democratic transition unfolded in two phases: initial multiparty negotiations to agree on key constitutional principles (1990–1994), followed by elections and an interim governance process leading to the passage of a new constitution (1994–1998).

During this transitional period, the ANC took important steps to support gender inclusion in the newly formed party. First, it implemented a formal rule: female ANC leaders and activists secured a 30 percent gender quota for party structures and electoral lists. As a result, one-third of ANC representatives in the 1994 parliament were women.[96] Two prominent women leaders, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu, were elected to the ANC's National Executive Committee, and the ANC Women's League was reestablished in South Africa.

The ANC also endorsed progressive provisions in the new constitution, including a commitment to nonsexism, a gender equality clause that supersedes customary law, and the creation of a statutory Commission on Gender Equality. However, the party's senior leadership remained mostly male. Over time, weakening feminist mobilization within the party and persistent patriarchal norms made it difficult to put legislative gains into practice.

Effects of Party Origins and Internal Characteristics

Several characteristics of the ANC facilitated gender inclusion in the postapartheid party formation period. First, the movement was ideologically committed to social transformation, and by the time of party formation, it officially recognized gender equality as a standalone movement goal. Second, women were central participants in the anti-apartheid struggle, which led them to build alliances, gain legitimacy, and recognize the importance of women's autonomous mobilization for gender equality. Third, women's participation in the armed struggle challenged traditional gender norms and gave rise to women leaders with strong struggle credentials. MK remained a male-dominated organization, but its influence on the party formation process was counterbalanced by other parts of the movement.

Transformative movement goals: Although the ANC emerged as a male-dominated organization, the movement's commitment to social transformation provided an ideological basis for female members to press for greater inclusion.[97] As a result, by the time of party formation, senior ANC leaders had officially recognized gender equality as a goal of the movement, a decision that enabled feminist activists to make more specific demands.

In its early years, the ANC focused primarily on national and racial liberation, often at the expense of gender issues.[98] Female members of the movement rarely framed their concerns in feminist terms. Beginning in the 1980s, however, women began denouncing chauvinism in the movement more explicitly and speaking openly about the intersection of gender, class, and racial oppression. Several factors explain this shift: women's experience training alongside men in MK, the growing influence of transnational feminism, and the disappointing experiences of women in liberation movements in neighboring countries.[99]

By the period of party formation, women's liberation in South Africa therefore already had become a prominent issue for debate in the movement, and male leaders provided rhetorical support for women's struggles.[100] In 1990, the ANC's National Executive Committee officially recognized women's emancipation as a standalone movement goal, thanks to the lobbying of senior women in the party.[101] As political scientist Shireen Hassim notes, the fact that the ANC "favored a structural transformation rather than merely a transfer of power" and that it had, "as a result of a slow process of internal transformation . . . committed itself to eradicating gender inequalities" enabled activists to press for specific gender equality commitments in the party formation period.[102] Moreover, even though the ANC's male leaders were not necessarily feminists, several understood the relevance of gender equality to the movement's goals. The country's first president, Nelson Mandela, in particular, was open to women activists' concerns and offered support at critical junctures.

Women's broad-based participation: A second key factor shaping gender inclusion in the ANC was the movement's reliance on the broad-based participation of women. The ANC's armed struggle was always just one pillar of its strategy; the movement also relied heavily on nonviolent mobilization and advocacy. Throughout the twentieth century, women participated in every pillar of the movement, even though the ANC excluded them from membership until the 1940s and appointed men to most formal leadership roles.[103] Women mobilized against early apartheid laws, organized women workers, and founded the cross-racial Federation of South African Women, which, by the 1950s, had established a Women's Charter demanding equal rights for all South Africans. In the 1970s and 1980s, women joined MK, became international spokespersons for the ANC through the ANC Women's Section, organized in underground units, and strengthened the mass democratic movement in South Africa.[104]

The broad scope of women's participation in the ANC had several consequences. First, it pushed the movement to recognize women as essential constituents and supporters of the anti-apartheid cause. Second, it helped the ANC form a strong cadre of women activists connected through cross-class and cross-racial networks, including the exiled ANC Women's Section and organizations in South Africa. Third, the act of coming together in South Africa and connecting with feminist movements and activists in other countries helped women recognize their shared experiences of marginalization. As a result, they increasingly saw the need to mobilize for gender equality as a separate goal within the broader liberation struggle.[105]

Drawing on their existing networks, women in the ANC intentionally prepared for the movement's transformation into a political party.[106] For example, the ANC Women's Section organized several meetings to connect South African women and build agreement on shared priorities for the constitutional negotiations and the party formation process.[107] As part of these meetings, South African women learned from other women's experiences in Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe that they could not wait until the country's first elections to push for gender equality.[108]

They agreed to press for a 30 percent gender quota for the ANC's National Executive Commitee, among other priorities.[109] "We recognized that it's one thing to be in a liberation struggle, and it's different to be in a political party," one female ANC leader remarked. "We knew that once we transformed into a party, it would be easy for the men to say 'thank you very much, but now we can handle this.'"[110] They thus entered the transition period with a clear list of gender equality demands, preexisting alliances, and structures like the Women's Section (reestablished in the country as the ANC Women's League in 1991) that served as the basis for subsequent organizing.

Women's participation in the armed struggle: In addition to the key roles that women played in nonviolent mobilization, their participation in MK also was an important factor in advancing gender inclusion within the movement. Their involvement challenged traditional gender norms within the ANC and gave rise to several women leaders with strong struggle credentials.

MK began as a predominantly male body, but following the 1976 Soweto uprising, increasing numbers of women left South Africa to join the armed struggle. They trained together with the men, enduring the same grueling physical regimen.[111] In practice, relatively few were deployed in combat operations—instead, they often served as couriers, nurses, and smugglers of arms and explosives.[112]

Yet, according to female MK combatant Thenjiwe Mtintso, "women members of MK had to be taken seriously. They had to explode the myth of women as inferior on a day to day basis. They did not articulate feminism but had to prove themselves in the field and gain respect."[113] Women's participation in MK, "the arena in which the most committed members were located," was thus symbolically significant, highlighting their equal status within the movement.[114] Several female MK members became prominent political leaders after the transition, including Thandi Modise, Dipuo Mvelase, and Mtintso.[115]

At the same time, women in MK also experienced limitations typical of male-dominated, hierarchical armed organizations.[116] Few women made inroads into leadership positions, even as women pressed for change in other parts of the ANC.[117] Some women, particularly younger ones, who joined the movement's training camps experienced sexual harassment and abuse—an issue that the ANC tried to silence or at least downplay.[118]

The challenges women experienced within MK, however, did not determine the degree of gender inclusion in the ANC overall. In the party formation phase, the influence of MK's hierarchical structure and patriarchal culture was mitigated by other pillars of the movement that were more open to women's participation, particularly mass democratic organizations.

Effects of the Transition Context

The ANC thus entered the transition period having formally committed to women's liberation and with strong networks of women activists who had gained legitimacy in the movement and articulated specific gender equality demands. Yet the party's senior leadership remained mostly male, and many male members did not view women's representation as a priority.

Several features of the political transition reinforced the internal demands women made for greater intraparty representation. For one thing, the negotiated settlement between the ANC and the apartheid regime created a political opening for broad institutional reforms and produced a rights-based political discourse that mitigated the armed movement's influence. Moreover, women formed a cross-party coalition that lobbied for greater gender inclusion during the negotiation process, using both targeted advocacy and grassroots mobilization. In addition, feminist leaders were represented in the country's transitional political organs and worked in conjunction with the broader women's movement.

An opening for rights-based claims: The nature of the South African transition created an enabling environment for women activists within the new party and in civil society to demand political inclusion. The ANC did not achieve an outright military victory; instead, it had to compromise with an entrenched political authority, as well as with other political parties and the various parts of the anti-apartheid movement. According to Hassim, these negotiations on the terms of a new democratic order "offered new possibilities for the women's movement to pursue its claims at a national political level."[119]

First, the protracted negotiations to agree on basic constitutional principles created space for women to identify their political priorities and consolidate support for their demands outside of the party. For example, in the first round of constitutional negotiations at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa in 1992, only twenty-three of the more than 400 delegates were women.[120] Women's groups used the breakdown in negotiations and the beginning of a new round of talks in 1993 to push for greater inclusion.[121]

In addition, the negotiated nature of the transition also led the ANC to suspend the armed struggle so as to facilitate negotiations, moderating the guerrilla arm's influence on the transition process.[122] Instead, the need to build political consensus produced a rights-based discourse that deemphasized nationalism and embraced liberal notions of equal citizenship. This shift opened space for activists to press for formal commitments on women's rights as a means of deepening South African democracy.[123] That said, certain characteristics of MK—including its hierarchical, secretive organizational culture— came to the fore at a later stage and did have a long-term impact on the party.

Women's mobilization inside and outside the process: A second key transition-related factor was the creation of an autonomous organization representing the women's movement. This body provided a forum for women activists to articulate their demands across political divides. Faced with resistance

to a gender quota within the ANC and marginalized from the first round of constitutional negotiations, women in the ANC recognized the need for a broader coalition.[124] In 1992, they came together with women from other political parties and civil society to form the Women's National Coalition (WNC). Many women were already linked through networks created during the anti-apartheid struggle, and others also shared the experience of suffering gender-based discrimination in a patriarchal society. They were willing to put aside their ideological differences to rally around joint priorities.[125]

Throughout the transition, the WNC exerted outside pressure during the negotiations while mobilizing women at the grassroots level. They successfully insisted that each political delegation in the multiparty negotiations include at least one woman delegate and that women be included on the technical committees charged with important substantive questions.[126] They also formed a monitoring collective that channeled expertise to women on the negotiation teams and relayed information about the negotiations back to members of civil society.[127]

In parallel, the WNC conducted a nationwide campaign educating and mobilizing women across South Africa and seeking their input into a new Women's Charter. The negotiations ultimately moved more quickly than this grassroots process, and the charter was not completed by the time the interim constitution was passed. Though many of the final decisions about the constitution were made by members of a small, mostly male circle, the charter campaign ensured that attention to women's demands became a marker of the ANC's commitment to its grassroots constituencies.

Feminist leaders in transitional bodies: The WNC relied not only on the strength of the women's movement but also on close links to women politicians on the negotiating teams.[128] Though women were numerically underrepresented in the transitional negotiations, feminist leaders such as Gertrude Shope and Frene Ginwla played important roles. They commanded respect from male colleagues owing to their long involvement in the liberation struggle, but they also had strong ties to the women's movement, which enabled them to promote a cross-racial agenda of gender-based justice.[129]

Ahead of the first democratic elections, they successfully lobbied Mandela to accept a quota for the ANC party lists, a measure that had previously been rejected at the party conference.[130] This meant that almost 30 percent of the delegates in the CA were women, a development that had critical implications for the constitution-drafting process and the first parliament's legislative agenda. For example, female ANC parliamentarians pushed for the creation of the Joint Monitoring Committee on Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women in South Africa to analyze the gender implications of government legislation and monitor the conditions experienced by women in the

country. They also created a task force on violence against women and secured explicit references to nonsexism in the South African constitution and a gender equality clause that would supersede customary law.[131]

Challenges in Early Party Development

Women in the ANC thus emerged from the transition having secured both party-level and constitutional commitments to nonsexism and in favor of gender equality, as well as a voluntary party quota. A group of feminist parliamentarians successfully built on these gains to push for further legislation on gender-related issues. In the years that followed, however, several challenges to gender inclusion in the ANC emerged.

Demobilization of the women's movement: First, most of the women's organizations that had been part of the mass movements of the 1980s decided to merge with the ANC, and a significant number of WNC activists moved into parliament.[132] For many, this decision made sense; they had fought for national liberation and considered the ANC their "political home."[133] The ANC also encouraged these organizations to disband, perhaps fearing that they would retain an autonomous power base.[134]

However, the result was the demobilization of large parts of civil society, including the women's movement. The WNC became a civil society watchdog with much weaker leadership and ties to women politicians, and subsequently it had very little impact on policy and legislative processes.[135] In hindsight, many politicians and party members questioned this decision, noting that it weakened the grassroots base that could hold the ANC accountable to its progressive commitments.[136]

Co-optation of women by the party: In addition, the Women's League became less engaged on gender equality issues over time.[137] Instead, it increasingly shifted back to its traditional role as an auxiliary branch of the party, and its leaders became less willing and able to challenge the party leadership.[138] This was partly the result of a generational shift: the women who entered the party after the transition often lacked their predecessors' roots in the liberation struggle and had less diverse ideological, class, and regional backgrounds.[139]

Second, some scholars argue that the ANC's increasing centralization of power meant that women were often promoted based on their party loyalty rather than their track record of activism.[140] The choice of a closed-list, proportional system of representation may have contributed to this problem, as this decision allowed party leaders to marginalize so-called troublesome women and made female representatives accountable to the party rather than to local constituencies.[141]

The consequences were significant. For example, the Women's League controlled the Office on the Status of Women responsible for ensuring attention to gender across government policies, yet a lack of resources and willingness to challenge the ANC leadership undermined the office's effectiveness. Ironically, the party's willingness to expand its gender quota to 50 percent in 2006 may have been sparked by the weakening of feminist activism in the party, a trend that may have made women's advances less threatening to male powerholders. According to one women's rights activist, "part of what happened is that men won women over. They empowered women who weren't a threat."[142]

The resurgence of residual patriarchal norms: Lastly, patriarchal norms and attitudes persisted in the party. Even though women were able to transition into formal politics in relatively large numbers, many struggled to reconcile their political careers with societal gender norms.[143] Moreover, certain characteristics that the ANC had developed during the armed struggle carried over into the party, including a culture of secrecy that left party members feeling pressured to deal with problems internally.[144]

Party leaders never formally reckoned with the sexual abuse that occurred in the ANC's exile camps, and they continued to sweep issues of gender-based violence and harassment in the party under the rug. For example, when former MK cadre and ANC parliamentarian Modise revealed in 1995 that her husband, another prominent ANC figure, had abused her, she was criticized for speaking out.[145] Party members accused of gender-based violence have rarely faced internal disciplinary proceedings, with the party failing to devise clear internal processes for addressing such cases.[146]

These challenges came to the fore with former president Jacob Zuma's ascent to power in the ANC. Before becoming president, Zuma had been accused of sexually assaulting a young ANC member while in exile, and he openly espoused misogynistic attitudes during his trial. The trial and Zuma's subsequent acquittal exposed deep divisions among women in the ANC, with some—including the leader of the Women's League—standing by his side and maligning his accuser.[147] During Zuma's leadership, "we saw a rollback of gains," argues a male activist for gender equality.[148] "The number of women in [the] cabinet dropped. The women who were drawn into [the] cabinet were more patriarchal in their orientation." Even today, the ANC lacks a sexual harassment policy and does not track cases of gender-based violence in its ranks—while women's organizations and activists continue to protest the government's failure to deal with violence against women.[149]

The case of Nepal provides further insights into the factors that influence gender inclusion in armed movements that evolve into political parties (see box 2).

BOX 2.
Comparative Insights: The Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist Center

The Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist Center (CPN-M) emerged as a left-wing movement seeking to overturn the country's stark societal hierarchies. It initially formed as a political party in the early 1990s before launching a ten-year insurgency against the country's feudal monarchy.[150] The group reentered Nepali electoral politics in 2006; after mass protests forced the king's resignation, the Maoists negotiated a comprehensive peace agreement with the new government and began their transformation from an insurgent organization to a political party.[151] In April 2008, the party won a majority of seats in the elections for a new CA. Its track record on gender inclusion has been mixed; while the party brought more women from lower-caste and rural backgrounds into Nepali politics, its decisionmaking structures have remained dominated by upper-caste men.

Effects of Party Origins and Internal Characteristics

Similar to the ANC in South Africa, the Maoists sought to transform Nepal into a more egalitarian society, even emphasizing the need to end patriarchal exploitation as one of their primary goals. The Maoists also enjoyed high levels of participation from lower-caste and rural women. In a highly stratified society, many Nepali women found the group's radical agenda appealing.[152] Women received the same training as men and served in capacities ranging from combatants to commanders.[153]

Following the end of the country's civil war, the Maoists' ideological commitment to the empowerment of marginalized social groups led the nascent party's leaders to advocate an electoral system based on proportional representation and a gender quota in the interim constitution drafting process. While the gender quota was instituted, thanks in large part to women's mobilization, the choice of electoral system proved controversial: in the end, a mixed electoral system that combines first-past-the-post voting with an element of proportional representation was adopted.[154]

As in Tunisia and South Africa, women's involvement in the Maoist movement in Nepal ensured that the Maoists had a cadre of ideologically committed women to draw on when the country began holding elections again, as the party ran more lower-caste women candidates than any other party.[155] Some women who had occupied high-level posts within the armed movement became prominent political leaders.[156]

At the same time, men from higher castes and elite backgrounds dominated the Maoists' leadership structures, an imbalance that persisted in the party formation phase.[157] In South Africa, MK was only one pillar of a broader social movement, and the ANC (after it was no longer banned) absorbed many women activists and leaders from mass democratic organizations and allied movements. This was not the case in Nepal, where the party retained a highly centralized structure, with opportunities for women determined primarily by loyalty and kinship to male leaders.[158] Most rank-and-file women were demobilized in a flawed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process, as many found themselves pushed back into the stereotypical gender roles that they had sought to escape.[159] Others remained involved in the party but lacked formal education or political experience—drawbacks that put them at a disadvantage within the party.[160]

Effects of the Transition Context

Two features of the transition created pressure in favor of greater inclusion of women. First, as in South Africa, women's groups in Nepali civil society mobilized for women's participation, using street protests, petitions, and advocacy campaigns.[161] These efforts resulted in women's inclusion in the drafting committee for the country's interim constitution. Women representatives on this committee then successfully pushed for a 33 percent quota for the CA elections.[162] Second, thanks to the quota, women (including seventy-four Maoists) gained roughly one-third of the seats in the CA.[163] Their advocacy, together with women's continued mobilization through civil society groups, ensured that the final 2015 constitution incorporated several important gender equality provisions, including the 33 percent gender quota.

Despite these gains, women were unable to challenge the concentration of power among a small, upper-caste male elite—a problem characterizing all major Nepali political parties. Several factors undercut women's influence. First, male leaders frequently shifted decisionmaking to closed-door meetings, thereby excluding women from critical discussions.[164] This dynamic worsened as the process dragged on; meanwhile, political deadlock weakened the legitimacy of the CA, which enabled political leaders to increasingly make decisions outside of set political structures.[165]

Moreover, women delegates found that their male colleagues across parties simply did not prioritize gender equality. They often felt pushed aside and insufficiently supported in the face of intimidation and violence.[166] Lastly, women struggled to overcome partisan, cultural, class, and caste divides.[167] Even though they came together in an informal caucus, women delegates never formed a national coalition that convened women politicians and civil society activists, as the WNC did in South Africa. As a result of these challenges, Nepal's final constitution failed to include a number of women's core demands, including equal citizenship rights.

Challenges in Early Party Development

The CPN-M played an important role in challenging women's traditional exclusion from Nepali politics and bringing a more diverse slate of women into positions of power. Yet, despite its revolutionary commitments, the party—which, in 2018, merged with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) to form the Nepal Communist Party—still reflects patriarchal attitudes and norms. The leadership reins have remained concentrated in the hands of upper-caste men, who have failed to implement the legal requirement that 33 percent of all positions in party structures and on candidate lists should go to women.[168] Moreover, as the party's focus shifted to governing, its priorities have changed and women's empowerment has been deemphasized. For example, the Maoist leadership joined other dominant parties in supporting a final constitution that included discriminatory citizenship provisions against women.[169]

Gender Inclusion After Dominant Parties Splinter

A third trajectory of party formation happens when new political parties are created from the splintering of dominant parties—the latter being parties that retain power over several successive electoral cycles and whose defeat generally appears unlikely.[170] Such parties exist in many semiauthoritarian regimes; in these contexts, ruling parties repeatedly win elections while using their positions of power to tilt the political playing field in their own favor.[171]

The splintering of dominant parties typically occurs due to internal factional conflict often triggered by succession crises. Breakaway parties can mount serious electoral challenges to dominant parties, particularly if they can appropriate some of their parent parties' support networks and funding sources.[172] In some cases, they garner enough support to trigger a change in government; in other instances, they may provoke an authoritarian response, leading to a closing of political space.

The gender characteristics of dominant parties heavily impact the level of gender inclusion within the breakaway factions they give rise to. Across Africa and Asia, many dominant parties have adopted some type of gender quota.[173] For these regimes, granting limited progress on women's rights can be politically safer, so to speak, than other types of reforms. They can rely on their dominance to selectively empower women who demonstrate party loyalty, while giving the appearance of greater inclusion.[174] Female party members have some space to push for gender equality reforms but generally adhere to the party line, whereas those who challenge the dominant order typically face repression.[175] In moments of splintering, these patterns affect how many women are likely to defect

in the first place, how much political influence they wield, and whether they have strong links to women's groups beyond the dominant parties. The drivers of such splits and the political contexts in which they occur also matter: does a given departing faction have ambitions to enact political reforms, and does the split in the country in question precede or follow a political opening that enables more comprehensive reforms?

The following section examines gender inclusion in the formation of the MPP, which was founded by defectors from Burkina Faso's ruling party at a moment of rising political discontent. The section concludes with comparative insights from the Forum for Democratic Change in Uganda.

The MPP in Burkina Faso

The MPP was formed in January 2014 by defectors from Burkina Faso's ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP). Led by then president Blaise Compaoré, the CDP consolidated power throughout the 1990s and 2000s by tilting the electoral field in its favor. After several years of rising discontent with Compaoré's centralization of power, his attempt to remove presidential term limits from the constitution was the pivotal turning point. A number of high-ranking party members broke off to form the MPP and contest his continued rule. Popular protests escalated, ultimately leading to Compaoré's resignation in October 2014. Following a one-year transition process, which was briefly disrupted by an attempted military coup, the country held elections in November 2015. MPP leader Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected president, and the new party gained a plurality in parliament.[176]

Despite women's important role in the popular uprising that ousted Compaoré, the percentage of women in parliament actually decreased from 18.9 percent before the uprising to 13.4 percent following the MPP's election.[177] The legislature's 30 percent gender quota adopted under the CDP remained in place, but the MPP leadership did not advocate its expansion during the transition process and failed to ensure that women were placed in electable positions on its candidate lists. Even though the party adopted a 30 percent gender quota for internal party structures, its leadership remained predominantly male. Women party members still struggle to access the resources needed to engage in politics and face intimidation, violence, and resistance from relatives and male party members.[178]

Effects of Party Origins and Internal Characteristics

The MPP was heavily influenced by the structures and culture of the CDP, which led to the low degree of gender inclusion in its early party development. For instance, structural barriers and informal discriminatory norms weakened the CDP's formal mechanisms for women's representation.

The MPP adopted the same mechanisms without a clear reform agenda. In addition, women in the CDP lacked strong structures for autonomous mobilization or links to women's civil society groups. As a result, women who joined the new party did not have a strong base of organizational support or clear demands for representation.

Superficial commitments to gender equality: The political faction that broke away from the CDP to form the MPP did not have a clear democratic reform agenda beyond challenging Compaoré's hold on power. As a result, the members of this faction adopted many of the CDP's structures, including its relatively weak mechanisms for women's representation.

When Compaoré initially seized power in 1987 in a violent coup d'état, he ousted the Marxist, anticolonial government of Thomas Sankara, which had strongly emphasized women's liberation.[179] Compaoré reversed many of Sankara's leftist policies but continued to officially support women's political and social empowerment.[180] The CDP government passed several legal reforms pertaining to women's rights, including the aforementioned gender quota that requires parties to fill 30 percent of the slots on their candidate lists with women.[181] Women parliamentarians in the CDP collaborated with women from other political parties and civil society groups to advance the measure. In addition, the party instituted an internal rule that reserved one-third of internal party leadership positions for women and one-third for youth.[182]

That said, women in the party and in civil society groups note that Compaoré and the CDP agreed to the quota to shore up domestic and international support, not out of a genuine commitment to gender equality.[183] Discriminatory practices undermined the quota's implementation: despite the requirement that women should fill 30 percent of candidate slots, they were typically pushed to the bottom of the CDP's candidate lists, which meant that their representation in parliament only increased from 11.7 to 15.8 percent following the law's passage. The party leadership often intervened to ensure that their preferred candidates would get placed on top—a system that only benefited women who had so-called mentors or godfathers in the leadership.[184]

Although the MPP's founders understood the need to attract female supporters and emphasized women's inclusion rhetorically, they did not articulate a clear gender reform agenda to address these patterns of marginalization.[185] Instead, they adopted many of the same structures that the CDP had, including the 30 percent gender quota for internal party structures and a national women's union with branches at different levels. These measures enabled women's representation in the party's newly established bureaus but did not remove the barriers that women faced when competing for nominations. In fact, the MPP's attempt to decentralize candidate selection ahead of the 2015 elections led to heightened internal competition for posts, resulting in intimidation and violence. This development further prevented women from participating fully in the political process and from securing high slots on the party's candidate lists.[186]

Weak autonomous mobilization in the party: Moreover, women politicians in the CDP lacked strong, coherent organizational structures capable of making demands on the party leadership. Before 2012, the CDP had a women's union with bureaus at different governance levels, but it acted primarily as a structure for voter mobilization. Women's representatives at the local level were tasked with turning women out for party assemblies and electoral rallies as well as on voting day.[187] Women leaders had neither budgets nor strategic plans to systematically support women in the party. At times, they could help a given woman get a better ranking on the electoral lists, but women political actors also were subject to intimidation, pressure, and resistance.[188] Moreover, they lacked strong linkages to women's civil society organizations that could have pushed for a more explicit feminist agenda, in part because the women's organizations were relatively weak themselves and wary of getting involved in partisan politics.[189] Lastly, divisions and competition between women—sometimes fostered or even exploited by male party colleagues—often impeded greater mobilization.[190]

The women who left the CDP to join the MPP evinced the same weakness, since they were not organized around gender-specific demands or priorities ahead of the party formation and political transition processes. Many of them had been dissatisfied with the lack of internal democracy in the CDP as well as the president's patronage-based style of politics. Yet they did not join forces around their shared experiences of marginalization as women.

Several women noted that the escalation of protests and the departure of the previous president (Compaoré) came somewhat unexpectedly and that they had little time to prepare clear plans for what would happen afterward.[191] "The general objective was to make the president leave. Everyone was behind this," recalls a female MPP politician. "The specific concerns of women, that was for after the elections."[192] Even women who wanted to prioritize gender equality felt that it should be addressed at a later stage, once the elections had been won. As a result, little organized pressure was exerted on male party leaders to press for fundamental changes, whether internally or during the transitional governance process.

Effects of the Transition Context

The popular uprising against Compaoré in some ways represented an opening for women in Burkinabe politics. In October 2015, thousands of women marched through Ouagadougou brandishing spatulas, a stark symbol of their discontent with the ruling regime. Although their mobilization helped pave the way for Compaoré's departure soon after, it did not reinforce gender inclusion within the newly formed MPP. In contrast to Tunisia and South Africa, the transition process in Burkina Faso did not strengthen formal gender quotas or other commitments to gender equality by political parties for several reasons.

For one thing, the country's rushed, violence-prone transition process left women without much time to coordinate and forge alliances with reform-oriented political actors. Beyond that, the women's movement was relatively weak and disorganized, and its push for a gender quota for the country's transitional institutions failed. As a result, women were poorly represented in the National Transitional Council (CNT) and lacked the influence to press party leaders for strengthened commitments to gender parity.

A hurried, violence-plagued transition: First, the hasty transition process was marked by high political tensions and violence, and women's organizations were left with little time to coordinate and organize on behalf of inclusion. There were also few partners interested in comprehensive reforms. Following Compaoré's resignation, the military, opposition parties, and civil society negotiated a transition charter that determined the rules for electing an interim president and established the CNT and a Commission for National Reconciliation and Reform. The CNT was tasked with passing new legislation; the commission was given a mandate to conduct popular consultations and propose political reforms in several areas.[193]

But most of the actors involved in the transition process had limited ambitions for structural transformation. The MPP, for example, wanted to retain constitutional term limits and address problems with the electoral code, but it did not articulate a broader democratic reform agenda. International partners primarily worried about instability in the wider Sahel region. Although some international actors spoke out on the need to include women in the transition, their highest priority was to ensure a peaceful transfer of power.[194] Civil society was thus the primary actor pushing for fundamental change, including for electoral and anticorruption reforms. Yet many civil society delegates felt that the timeline was too rushed.[195] Moreover, most civil society organizations did not have a strong gender equality agenda—a problem discussed in more detail below.

The transition period was also marked by relatively high levels of political violence, which discouraged women's participation.[196] Some women faced opposition from their husbands, who thought that it would be too dangerous for them to become involved in politics during this volatile period.[197] According to both CDP and MPP interviewees, although violence impacted women in all parties, women in the CDP were particularly affected; many experienced verbal aggression and threats from their political opponents, leading some of them to withdraw from politics.[198]

A weak, disorganized women's movement: In contrast to their counterparts in both Tunisia and South Africa, women's rights activists in Burkina Faso lacked the capacity and cohesion to act quickly and effectively to press for gender inclusion in the negotiations. Thousands of women took to the streets

to mobilize against Compaoré, but most participated as individuals rather than through parties or civil society organizations. As a result, their mobilization dissipated once civil society began negotiating with other key actors to decide what the transition process would look like.[199]

Women's organizations were poorly prepared for the transition and lacked strong linkages to women in political parties or other parts of civil society.[200] They were mostly absent from the early transitional negotiations and late in pushing for a gender quota for the transitional institutions.[201] Their proposal for an overall quota failed to gain traction; instead, political parties, the military, and civil society each devised their own selection process.

Yet even within civil society, women's participation was deprioritized relative to men's demands and interests.[202] For example, when women's groups pushed for the inclusion of a woman on the list of civil society candidates for the interim presidency, they were told that the choices (all men) had already been submitted to the Economic Community of West African States.[203] Similarly, their proposal for a quota for civil society delegates to the CNT encountered strong resistance, with male civil society leaders accusing several women's rights activists of belonging to the CDP and asking them to leave their meetings.

In the end, the women's groups' demand for a 30 percent quota was not met. The selection process for civil society representatives on the CNT was chaotic and marked by cronyism and infighting, which made it difficult for women to make their demands heard. "Men put the people they wanted first, and there wasn't a unified group that supported the women," noted one women's rights activist.[204]

Limited representation in the transitional body: Due to these challenges, women ultimately made up only 13.3 percent of the CNT delegates—a decline compared to the previous legislature under Compaoré, where women had held 18.9 percent of the seats.[205] The political opposition decided that every party except the two smallest ones would each get one seat, and most parties chose male representatives.[206] The former ruling coalition was granted ten seats, but those who had supported the modification of the constitution were excluded, including several prominent female politicians.[207]

Given their low numbers, women in the CNT found it difficult to mobilize as a bloc.[208] They faced pressure to focus on other reform priorities given the short transition time frame, and they lacked the influence to push back against male resistance. Few of them had backgrounds in politics or women's rights, which meant that they did not have substantial expertise on some issues and were at times hesitant to speak up.[209] That said, they did have an internal coordination structure and worked together to make sure women's voices were represented in different legislative discussions.[210] For example, they successfully lobbied for a law on violence against women in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and civil society.[211]

By contrast, however, an effort to strengthen the quota law imposing candidate ranking requirements failed. A committee that included representatives from political parties, civil society, and the government developed the proposal; and the Ministry for Women introduced it to the CNT.[212] Yet the women in the CNT appeared ill-prepared to advocate the proposal, and it provoked strong cross-party opposition from men.[213] The draft measure was eventually withdrawn without a vote. "Within political parties, the men were not ready to cede their places. So when they were in the Assembly, they weren't afraid to say: 'Attention! If we let them come in large numbers, we will find ourselves outside!'" recounted one women's rights activist. "So, at this level, there was masculine solidarity."[214]

Challenges in Early Party Development

The transition process in Burkina Faso thus did not result in any formal rules or commitments that would have obliged the MPP to strengthen women's political inclusion in the party. Instead, women played a relatively minor role in the overall process. Although the party has adopted the same internal gender quotas as the CDP, the challenges facing women also largely remain the same. The party leadership is weakly committed to promoting women into positions of power, the women's wing primarily remains an arm for voter mobilization, and women continue to face male resistance and hostility when competing for coveted nominations or leadership posts.

Weak leadership commitment: Existing institutional mechanisms aimed at increasing gender equality in the MPP have not forced the male elites who hold power to relinquish any control. For instance, the electoral quota still leads to women being placed in disadvantageous positions on candidate lists. Male party leaders deplore local resistance to the quota and the lack of women who put themselves forward, but female parliamentarians note that the party could do much more to recruit and promote qualified women.[215] The Women's Wing, for example, remains primarily a party arm for recruitment and mobilization, as it lacks dedicated resources for supporting women's leadership. Instead, women must make these efforts on an ad hoc basis or with the support of international organizations.

The party also lacks mechanisms to address additional sociocultural and financial impediments women face in politics, including barriers to freedom of movement and scheduling constraints. "If they really wanted it, it would be different. Even the educated men, faced with women, they are reluctant. They won't accept that women get ahead of them," said one female MPP member. "And the quota law doesn't work. It's as if it was nothing. . . . It's hard to change. Even men with a very high level [of education] have prejudice."[216]

Social norms impede women's equal participation: Entrenched beliefs that men have an intrinsic right to wield political power and hold leadership positions remain at the root of women's unequal status in the MPP. Politically active women are often called prostitutes or loose women, and they face attacks on their morality and reputation. Mandated institutional reforms alone, such as the gender quota, so far have been unable to change these gender norms.

In addition, male leaders do not have any clear incentives to change the rules so as to increase women's participation. Instead, many of them view the increased participation of women as a zero-sum game: a gain in position, power, and influence for women means a commensurate loss for men. Women in the party emphasize that men are unwilling to "cede their place[s]" to women and are even prepared to take active measures to "march over us and push us to the back."[217] This male dominance is sometimes maintained through violent tactics aimed at controlling or undermining women's political power—tactics such as forcing women off candidate lists or threatening them and their families.

The case of Uganda offers significant similarities and differences to the case of Burkina Faso as it pertains to gender inclusion in parties that splinter from dominant political parties (see box 3).

BOX 3.
Comparative Insights: The Forum for Democratic Change in Uganda

The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) in Uganda is another example of a new party that formed after the splintering of a dominant party. In the early 2000s, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni—faced with rising internal dissent and external pressure—agreed to transform the country's purported no-party democracy back into a multiparty system.[218] The FDC was formed in August 2004 following the merger of three opposition groups dominated by former officials of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) who were dissatisfied with Museveni's increasing authoritarianism and centralization of power.[219] In contrast to the creation of the MPP in Burkina Faso, however, the formation of the FDC did not usher in a change in political leadership. Instead, Museveni responded to the reintroduction of multiparty politics by further consolidating his political control. The case of the FDC thus illustrates the additional challenges of gender inclusion in a new splinter party formed amid regime continuity and heightened government repression.

Effects of Party Origins and Internal Characteristics

Like the MPP, the FDC was not formed to create a radically different political organization but rather to counter the consolidation of power in the hands of Museveni and his inner circle.[220] Most of the party's founders and top officials were male, ex-NRM elites or businessmen who attempted to mirror the NRM's internal structures.[221] They formally recognized gender equality as a goal but did not make women's inclusion a central priority.[222]

Given that the NRM had used women's empowerment as a strategy to shore up political support, the FDC struggled to attract female politicians and voters. In the 1990s, Museveni had introduced reserved seats for women at the national and local levels and had appointed women to various high-level political positions.[223] These measures had increased women's representation but had weakened female politicians' legitimacy and autonomy, making them dependent on high-level NRM support.[224] As the dominant party, the NRM nevertheless provided certain benefits to female politicians. The party has long had the financial resources to support female candidates who are more dependent on party support than men. As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising that relatively few women politicians chose to join the FDC, a party with far fewer resources and lower chances of electoral success.[225]

Effects of the Transition Context

Two external factors further worked against the emergence of greater gender inclusion in the newly formed FDC. Most importantly, and in contrast to the MPP of Burkina Faso, the ruling NRM in Uganda maintained political power, as the splinter party did not win the first subsequent election or any later ones. As a result, there was no formal political transition process that could have provided an opening for women to push for greater inclusion. Amid the return to multiparty politics, the NRM instead responded with increased political repression, which reinforced the FDC's difficulties in attracting women members and supporters.[226] Women in Ugandan politics already faced gender-specific risks of violence, and joining an opposition party in the context of heightened authoritarianism exposed those who did enter the ranks of the FDC to additional threats, gender-based violence, and family pressures.[227] Moreover, the NRM successfully painted the FDC as a violent, antiwomen party, which may also have contributed to many women's hesitancy to embrace the new organization.[228]

Second, even though the shift to multiparty politics could have been a potential opening for women's groups to push for greater political inclusion, the Ugandan women's movement did not tie its demands to broader democratic reforms. Instead, throughout the 1990s, it focused mostly on antidiscrimination and human rights issues and advocated change within the existing no-party system. Multiparty politics had not served Ugandan women's interests well in the past, and many politically active women did not want to undermine their relationships with the ruling NRM.[229] As a result, the question of women's political inclusion remained largely invisible in broader debates about the return to multiparty politics and the future of Ugandan democracy.[230]

Challenges in Early Party Development

As a result of these factors, the FDC struggled to field women candidates. In 2006, the party fielded candidates in only five of the ten districts reserved for women.[231] This problem continues to persist, as the party has never run women candidates in all of the 140 district seats for women, and there have been fewer women in senior party positions in the FDC than in the NRM.[232] Moreover, although the FDC has been more progressive on certain women's issues, the NRM still enjoys an advantage in terms of women's support.

In general, it has been difficult for Ugandan women's groups to push a strong feminist agenda through political parties, as their concerns are often dismissed.[233] Both parties maintain a nebulous stance on gender issues, permitting incremental progress when convenient but impeding efforts that could "[challenge] established power structures."[234] What legislative progress there has been on issues of gender equality has been driven by the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association, a nonpartisan women's caucus that facilitates collaboration between women in the NRM and the FDC. The relative effectiveness of this caucus in a difficult environment underlines the importance of women's cross-party collaboration outside of party structures to exert pressure for gender equality reforms.

Analytical Conclusions

Political parties around the world face a crisis in public confidence. Many citizens view them as fundamentally unrepresentative, inaccessible, and unresponsive to their concerns. Parties pose particular challenges for women, who continue to be underrepresented in their leadership and decisionmaking ranks. The experience of NDI and other democracy assistance providers shows that

it is often extremely difficult to eliminate these gendered power imbalances in established parties. Male party members often have little interest in changing the status quo, and women struggle to mobilize on issues separate from partisan goals.

These challenges motivated this analysis of the barriers and enablers of gender inclusion in the *early* stages of party development after political transitions or ruptures. It focused on three types of parties often formed in such periods of political flux: parties that emerge from nonviolent social movements, parties that emerge from armed movements, and parties that split off from dominant ruling parties. The study centered on two main questions. First, how do the origins and internal characteristics of these political parties influence gender inclusion in early party development? Second, how do the transition contexts in which party formation occurs interact with these internal characteristics to shape gender equality in these nascent parties?

The following section briefly summarizes the findings for each of the three sections and highlights important cross-cutting themes. It concludes with preliminary recommendations that policymakers, practitioners, and assistance providers can follow to support more inclusive party formation during periods of political transition.

From Nonviolent Social Movement to Political Party

In Tunisia, the Ennahda movement transformed into a political party following the 2011 revolution. Two internal characteristics of the movement created a permissive context for women's political participation in the new party. First, Ennahda's leadership had moved toward greater moderation on women's rights and was open to making compromises on these issues when faced with concerted pressure from civil society. Second, women had played important roles in keeping the movement alive under state repression. As a result, they enjoyed greater influence and legitimacy within the movement and were ready to take on more political roles when the opportunity arose.

Yet the central push for gender inclusion in Ennahda (as well as in other Tunisian parties) came from women's mobilization in civil society and feminist activists in key transition organs. The country's relatively strong, experienced women's organizations were able to organize and coordinate quickly, drawing on the country's history of activism and reform on behalf of gender equality. They lobbied for a formal parity rule for the NCA and mobilized to enshrine gender equality and political parity provisions in the new constitution and electoral law. The depth and length of the transition process and its relative openness to civil society facilitated their advocacy for institutional reform. Women's rights activists also benefited from representation in the transitional body that designed the country's electoral rules.

Although some Ennahda members initially advanced a more conservative approach, they backed down in the face of strong pressure from civil society, and the party leadership recognized the political benefits of supporting women's representation so as to demonstrate their democratic credentials. In the end, some women in Ennahda collaborated with women in other parties to support gender equality and political parity commitments in the new constitution and electoral law.

In the case of MAS in Bolivia, women's mobilization was also key. But their activism *within the movement* helped drive the party toward greater inclusion. Even though MAS initially lacked explicit gender equality goals, indigenous and rural women played central roles in bringing the movement to power, including by mobilizing through women-only organizations. After MAS secured an electoral victory, these women relied on their strong organizational base and ties to the leadership to make more explicit gendered demands, drawing on indigenous traditions. As in Tunisia, the constitutional reform process in Bolivia provided an opening to push for institutional reforms. Moreover, at critical junctures, indigenous women successfully formed advocacy coalitions with feminist organizations despite a history of division between the two sides.

Even with strong formal rules mandating gender parity on electoral lists, women in both Ennahda and MAS still face structural and sociocultural barriers to participation.[235] In the two parliamentary elections held in Tunisia since the country's transition, Ennahda has complied with the letter of the quota law but has rarely placed women on top of legislative electoral lists. Women are also underrepresented in party leadership, and male party elites do not appear open to creating a more enabling internal environment.

Until the political upheaval that shook Bolivia in 2019, MAS had more than fifteen years to support women's leadership in party structures, and it helped propel more indigenous and rural women into positions of political power. Formal mechanisms to support women's inclusion have provoked resistance and backlash, however. Women have encountered high levels of direct violence aimed at maintaining gendered power structures, even though the Bolivian government passed a law in 2012 specifically designed to combat such violence.[236]

For a breakdown of the most pertinent factors at play in these two cases, see box 4.

BOX 4.
Key Takeaways

- **Prior political experience:** Participation in nonviolent social movements can provide women with skills, networks, and legitimacy that help propel them into formal political roles following political transitions.

- **Different forms of mobilization:** Movement goals can create an ideological basis for women's inclusion, yet concrete measures often depend on women's internal and external mobilization as well as senior leadership support. If women within a given movement do not have the capacity for autonomous mobilization, external mobilization of civil society for quotas and other institutional reforms is essential.

- **Semiautonomous structures:** The cases of MAS in Bolivia and of the ANC in South Africa show that having semiautonomous structures for women's organization within movements can create a basis for women to forge broader coalitions and make gender-specific demands.

From Armed Movement to Political Party

The ANC in South Africa is an example of a party with high levels of gender inclusion early in its development. But when it first emerged as a movement, the ANC had no distinct gender equality goals, and its leadership was predominantly male. Women's broad-based participation in the anti-apartheid struggle was essential to driving the ANC toward greater gender inclusion. It enabled women to form linkages and networks and learn from feminist activists in other contexts. Women also trained alongside men in MK, thereby challenging traditional gender norms. These experiences pushed women in the ANC to mobilize for gender equality as a goal distinct from racial and national liberation. They developed a clear set of priorities for the party formation process and understood the high stakes.

During the transition process, several external factors helped push the still male-dominated party toward greater gender inclusion. First, the negotiated political transition moderated the influence of the movement's guerrilla arm and provided an opening for gender equality advocates to make rights-based claims. Second, women formed a broad, cross-party advocacy coalition, which benefited from grassroots ties as well as close linkages to women leaders involved in the negotiations.

Together, these factors resulted in important gains, including a party-level gender quota and commitments to gender equality in the new constitution. Feminist politicians in the ANC also secured several progressive policy gains throughout the 1990s. The revolutionary opening that spurred these gains in South Africa, however, did not necessarily disrupt societal gender norms, and, over time, patriarchal attitudes resurged within the party. The demobilization of the women's movement and the co-optation of feminist activism in the party exacerbated this trend.

In Nepal, meanwhile, women participated in the Maoist movement at high levels—in part because of the group's commitment to radical social transformation. Their involvement changed the discourse around women's political participation by challenging traditional gender norms. Yet the movement's senior leadership remained dominated by a small group of mostly upper-caste men who retained control through the party formation process.

Initially, the party leadership supported a gender quota and ran a relatively high number of lower-caste female candidates, but these efforts lagged in terms of implementation, and the party became less committed to women's empowerment over time. The transition process failed to fundamentally alter these dynamics; although women mobilized to ensure certain gender equality provisions were included in the final constitution, they were unable to form as powerful a coalition as women did in South Africa. Decisionmaking power has remained concentrated among elite men.

For an overview of the degree of gender inclusion that the ANC and the CPN-M exhibited, see box 5.

BOX 5.
Key Takeaways

- **A challenge to traditional societal norms**: In South Africa and Nepal, women's participation in armed movements challenged traditional gender norms and politicized women members.

- **The differing fates of commanders and combatants**: In both countries, some female leaders active in their respective armed movements made the transition into politics. That said, most rank-and-file combatants, whether female or male, did not. For these excombatants, gender-sensitive disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration measures are essential.

- **Prior leadership roles**: Women who played leadership or political roles in their respective armed groups or in allied movements were better positioned in the party formation period. In the case of the ANC, women were underrepresented in MK, but they formed networks and gained political skills in other parts of the movement.

- **Egalitarian ideals**: The ANC's and the Maoists' respective egalitarian ideologies made male leaders more open to supporting certain gender-sensitive measures promoted by feminist activists, such as gender quotas. Top leadership posts nevertheless remained dominated by men.

- **Vestiges of male-dominant hierarchies**: Armed groups' hierarchical, male-dominated leadership structures can pose significant challenges for women's full inclusion. Whether or not these structures persist in the nascent parties that follow depends on the leaders' political incentives to decentralize decisionmaking, as well as the strength of women's mobilization.

From Dominant Party to Splinter Group

The case of the MPP in Burkina Faso highlights potential barriers to gender inclusion in party formation processes. In this case, the nascent party emerged out of a dominant party with established structures and rules, none of which aimed to genuinely empower women. The CDP implemented mechanisms to promote women's participation, including a legislative gender quota, yet women were typically placed at the bottom of candidate lists. Some women politicians gained political prominence, but they lacked strong autonomous mobilization structures to articulate gender-specific demands. The entire party was characterized by clientelistic decisionmaking, which undermined collaboration among women. The members of the faction that broke off to form the MPP felt that they had been deprived of their turn in power, but the group did not have a broader political reform agenda. Moreover, the women who joined the breakaway faction did not organize around gender equality goals; at the time, many felt that these issues could be addressed at a later stage.

Several characteristics of the transition context in Burkina Faso also proved unconducive for gender inclusion in the new party. The relatively rushed transition process, shaped by international pressure, made it difficult for women's groups to push for deep institutional reforms. The women's movement was relatively weak and did not have the capacity to mobilize quickly or forge coalitions with other civil society actors.

As a result, the rules for selecting the delegates for the main transitional body were designed without a gender-oriented lens, resulting in low levels of women's presentation. Male politicians pushed aside an effort to revise the country's gender quota. Ultimately, the splintering of the CDP and the formation of the MPP brought few gains for women's political participation: social norms, structural barriers, and male resistance still impede women's involvement, despite the existence of gender quotas.

In Uganda, a somewhat similar pattern unfolded. The FDC, formed primarily by former NRM officials dissatisfied with Museveni's increasing consolidation of power, replicated many of the same party structures without focusing on gender inclusion. The party struggled to attract women—in part because the NRM had successfully positioned itself as promoting women's political participation through high-level appointments and a reserved seat system. The lack of real political opening and heightened repression by the NRM also made it more difficult for the new party to recruit women politicians and members. Moreover, most women's groups did not explicitly focus on democratic or electoral reforms, as they feared disrupting their relationships with the NRM and tended to associate multiparty politics with women's exclusion.

Box 6 offers a readout of the factors that shaped the degree of gender inclusion in the MPP and FDC.

BOX 6.
Key Takeaways

- **Cause of party divides**: As dominant parties splinter, the cause of the falling out is important, as it determines whether new parties will be reform-oriented or primarily concerned with seeking political power.

- **Nature of parent parties**: The characteristics of the original parties that new factions branch off from also matter, as splinter parties are likely to replicate institutionalized structures and behavior.

- **Costs of co-optation and repression**: In cases where the original dominant parties are strong enough to effectively co-opt women, women may be less likely to take the risk of defecting to a new faction. Similarly, if new parties are met with repression, women may be less likely to join their ranks given the high risk of violence.

- **Risks of marginalization**: Political liberalization as the result of a splintering process can also disadvantage women, as they may be sidelined in subsequent fights for new political posts.

Cross-Cutting Insights

Several cross-cutting themes emerged across the different cases. These findings are by no means exhaustive, but they offer a starting point for democracy and governance practitioners, aid providers, and political parties seeking to support greater gender inclusion in new political parties.

The organizational origins of emerging parties matter in terms of the degree of gender inclusion they exhibit in early party development. Parties' origins shape their leaders' political goals and their overall receptivity to gender inclusion. The genesis of such parties also influences whether they have a pool of women activists and supporters who can step forward as candidates, as well as female leaders who have the networks and political influence necessary to take on leadership roles in the new parties. In the cases of the ANC in South Africa and Ennahda in Tunisia, women played important roles in supporting the movements during periods of regime repression. As a result, both parties benefited from cadres of women activists with strong social ties to their respective movements who were ready to lead and run as candidates.

However, across the organizations examined in this study, in many cases, women were underrepresented in senior leadership positions before, during, and after political transitions. Given this imbalance, a key internal factor shaping women's influence within nascent parties was their degree of autonomous mobilization in and through preparty organizations.

For example, in the cases of MAS in Bolivia and the ANC in South Africa, women formed semiautonomous structures for mobilization within their respective pretransition organizations, and they used these structures to formulate joint priorities and demands for representation. In contrast, as for the CDP in Burkina Faso, women members were organized into a women's wing, but this entity had relatively limited power and autonomy, and it did not make strong demands for gender equality in the party. As a result, the women who left the CDP to join the MPP did not have a coordinated gender equality agenda, nor did they possess the power to effectively lobby the predominantly male party leadership.

Across the different case studies, the degree of gender inclusion within nascent parties was influenced not only by these entities' internal characteristics but also by features of the transitions that gave rise to them. Most importantly, in Tunisia, Bolivia, and Nepal, democratic transition processes resulted in legislated quotas that mandated women's representation *across* political parties, independently from parties' internal mechanisms. In all three of these countries as well as South Africa, constitution-drafting processes also pushed political parties to make formal commitments to gender equality.

Several contextual factors contributed to greater gender inclusion. First, longer, more comprehensive transition processes aimed at transforming foundational laws and revising constitutions were helpful, as these transitions provided multiple entry points for advocates to push for commitments to and measures for gender parity. In contrast, rushed, shallow transition processes only aimed at holding elections as quickly as possible, such as in the case of Burkina Faso, were considerably less conducive to greater gender inclusion.

The existence of organized, broad-based, and autonomous women's movements was a central factor. Across the different cases, women's organizations lobbied to ensure that women would be part of transitional negotiations and advocated specific parity measures. Coalition building between women in civil society and women in political parties was particularly impactful: in both South Africa and Bolivia, women within parties were able to amplify their influence by connecting with feminist activists in civil society organizations.

Such coalition building was possible only because women were able to set aside ideological differences and focus on shared priorities. In Tunisia, where women's cross-party coalition building was hampered by political polarization and legacies of mistrust, women's groups nevertheless enjoyed strong ties to other parts of civil society, which strengthened their impact. The same dynamic played out in Bolivia, where indigenous women's organizations were backed by broader indigenous alliances. In Burkina Faso, conversely, women's groups were not well-coordinated and lacked strong ties to women in the MPP, as well as the support of male-dominated civil society organizations.

Having women with strong links to feminist groups and organizations at the table in formal transition and constitutional negotiations helped ensure that gender equality commitments and parity measures remained on parties' political agendas. Such inclusion also played a part in fostering related constitutional commitments, new electoral codes, and party bylaws. For example, in both Nepal and Tunisia, the inclusion of women in early transitional bodies charged with designing processes for CA elections was crucial in ensuring the adoption of quotas, which in turn enabled a baseline of women's representation in constitution-drafting processes.

The difficulty of shifting the organizational cultures of nascent parties also stood out. Whether parties originate as armed groups, social movements, or factions of dominant parties, patriarchal norms influence how women are viewed and treated both formally and informally. Those that hold power in political organizations are almost always male and are generally reluctant to share power. As a result, even as parties adopt internal quotas or comply with legislated quotas that require them to recruit more women candidates, women still struggle to land in the most electable and influential positions.

Across different contexts, party leaders argued that women were not sufficiently qualified or that they lacked attributes that would make them more electable in the eyes of voters. In contrast, female politicians emphasized that male leaders were actively blocking their advancement and were not doing enough to build a pipeline of female candidates and leaders. Discriminatory gender norms also manifested themselves in the attitudes and behaviors of male party colleagues and leaders: challenges ranged from sexist comments to sexual harassment, psychological threats and intimidation, and even violence.

Lastly, while transitions can bring about important institutional reforms, structural barriers to women's political engagement—such as an unequal distribution of household responsibilities and financial resources—rarely change overnight. Across the different cases examined in this study, women in political parties and in civil society organizations have made progress in advocating quotas and other mechanisms that ensure their descriptive representation. They have been significantly less successful, however, at pushing for party support to address these structural inequities, as male party leaders often do not view these challenges as their responsibility to address. Continued external pressure on parties after their transitions is therefore critical to sustaining institutional gains and preventing backsliding.

Preliminary Recommendations

This study suggests several steps that policymakers, practitioners, and assistance providers can take to support gender inclusion in political parties formed during periods of political transition. These strategies are a starting point and will need to be complemented with further contextual analysis. They will be further developed in NDI's forthcoming program guidance on early party development.

- **Begin with gendered political economy analysis:** Understanding transition contexts and their gender-related characteristics is critical for identifying the entry points for gender-sensitive party support. Such analyses should investigate the causes, depth, and length of political

transitions, as well as the political and economic landscapes and sociocultural contexts. Such studies should explicitly examine how gender shapes access to power and resources and should be informed by the perspectives of a diverse set of women.

- **Conduct gender and inclusion assessments of political parties:** Political transitions give rise to parties that come from different origins. As a result, cookie-cutter approaches and interventions will not work. Assistance providers should fund and conduct gender and inclusion assessments to identify how formal and informal characteristics of preparty organizations—if such an organization exists in a given context—will impact early party development. These assessments should then inform the design of party-specific interventions.[237]

- **Offer pretransition support to women's groups:** Supporting cross-sectoral collaboration and movement-building efforts among women's groups and activists is important for ensuring coordination and readiness when political openings occur. Fostering exchanges and solidarity between women's movements in similar contexts and providing technical guidance on institutional reforms such as gender quotas can help women's groups clarify their political demands before formal negotiations begin. Intentionally supporting autonomous women's organizations both financially and substantively may also help make civil society organizations more gender inclusive overall. Such support should always be rooted in and sensitive to local needs and demands.

- **Ensure gender-transformative transition support:** During transitions, international actors should support the active engagement of feminist leaders in the transitional bodies negotiating new governing structures. All technical assistance provided to transition processes, such as support for drafting constitutions and electoral and political party rules, should include guidance on gender-sensitive institution building. Supporting coalition building and coordinated actions of civil society organizations and women's movements will enable groups to exert pressure from the outside.

- **Provide targeted support for gender equality within early party development:** It is critical that parties establish principles of gender equality in all foundational documents that direct how they operate, including those guiding leadership nomination and selection procedures. Such commitments can provide anchors for sustained internal advocacy for inclusion. Party assistance should also support party leaders in developing plans to recruit a diverse swathe of female candidates, including for countries' first post-transition elections. It is also critical, however, to address the impact of patriarchal gender norms on individual behavior as well as on internal decisionmaking processes and party structures. Targeted efforts aimed at securing or deepening male party leaders' and members' commitment to gender equality may be needed.

- **Prioritize sustained party support**: Support for gender inclusion should continue after transition processes. If quotas have already been adopted, subsequent priorities may include the creation or strengthening of parliamentary women's caucuses and coalitions, autonomous bodies for women in political parties, and party mechanisms that support greater internal inclusion, such as sexual harassment policies or childcare support for candidates. Providing ongoing support focused on creating an enabling environment for civil society is also important for ensuring that local groups can hold nascent political parties accountable to gender-progressive commitments made during transitions.

Appendix: Research Methodology

In Tunisia, interviewees included twenty-three politicians and seven civil society representatives. For the South African case, the authors relied more extensively on existing secondary research and primary documents and interviewed a total of fourteen participants, including eight former or current party leaders, four civil society representatives, and two academics. In Burkina Faso, the authors interviewed a total of forty-one participants, including thirty-five politicians and six civil society representatives. In Tunisia and Burkina Faso, participants were contacted through NDI's outreach to the respective political parties, meaning that party leaders had some control over which party members would participate in the study. To mitigate party members' likely reluctance to speak negatively about their parties, it was made clear that none of the participating politicians and party officials would be cited by name. Whenever possible, the authors tried to corroborate participants' narratives with secondary research and interviews with civil society actors or opposition party politicians and sought to highlight any contradictions that emerged.

Because of time and funding constraints, all interviews took place in major urban centers. However, in Burkina Faso, one focus group included women politicians from outside the capital. In Burkina Faso and Tunisia, at least one-third of the research participants had served in local-level offices in the past, and most had been politically active outside the capital in the pretransition periods. Nevertheless, the analysis may be somewhat biased toward the experiences of national-level politicians. In Burkina Faso and Tunisia, the authors conducted the interviews in French, and interpreters were available for Tunisian participants who preferred to speak in Arabic. All interview questions were developed in consultation with local NDI staff or, in the case of South Africa, with local research assistants. The questions probed the institutional, sociocultural, and individual-level barriers to and enablers of women's participation in pretransition entities, during political transitions, and in the early party development period.

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Acknowledgments

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