The Global Use of Gender Quotas in Politics – controversial, yet popular

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by

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A new discourse presented by contemporary women’s movements

- European Women’s Lobby under the slogan ‘No Modern European Democracy without Gender Equality’. 2008 campaign

- “The current under-representation of women in most elected assemblies in Europe, including in the European Parliament, is a serious democratic deficit threatening the legitimacy of European institutions and political parties”. (www.womenslobby.org).
World Average 2015
(single or lower Houses of Parliament)

World Average: 22.9 % women

- Nordic countries: 41.1 %
- Americas: 27.4 %
- Europe (OSCE), incl. Nordic: 25.8 %
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 23.4 %
- Arab states: 19.0 %
- Asia: 19.0 %
- Pacific: 13.1 %

• WWW.IPU.ORG
# Women in Parliament

Top ranking countries in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women in parliament, percentage (election year)</th>
<th>Qoutas</th>
<th>Election system</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rwanda</td>
<td>64.0 (2013)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cuba</td>
<td>48.9 (2013)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>One party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Seychelles</td>
<td>43.8 (2011)</td>
<td>No Quotas</td>
<td>SMD</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Sweden</td>
<td>43.5 (2014)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Senegal</td>
<td>42.7 (2012)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Mexico</td>
<td>42.4 (2015)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Ecuador</td>
<td>41.6 (2013)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Namibia</td>
<td>41.3 (2014)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Nicaragua</td>
<td>40.2 (2011)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
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<td>15. Mozamb.</td>
<td>39.6 (2014)</td>
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Election day figures 45 countries over 30% women in their parliament (lower or single house)
Electoral Gender Quotas

• 86 countries have introduced electoral gender quotas in their constitution or electoral law (ex. Rwanda, Belgium, Bolivia).

• In around 30 other countries some political parties make use of voluntary party quotas for their electoral list (ex. Sweden, Norway, Iceland)

• A first global overview:

• The global web site: www.quotaproject.org
• Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas, 2014. International Idea, the Inter-parliamentary Union and Stockholm University.
Nordic legislation on public commissions

• Since the 1980s, all the five Nordic countries have adopted legislation or regulation on equal participation of women and men in all public commissions, committees and boards.

• An organization, party or department, which is entitled to one member in a new public commission, has to come up with two names, one man and one woman, enabling the minister to appoint a gender balanced commission.
Norway 2008 Corporate Quotas

• At least 40% of each gender among the members of the boards of the big companies and municipal companies – public as well as private.

• Now followed by Iceland, France, Spain and Italy.

• Denmark and the European Union: ‘soft’ quotas = recommendation, targets

• Sweden: quotas, if parity not achieved before 2017.
The Diagnosis

- 23% of the members of the world’s parliament are women
- Few women in company boards
- Why are women under-represented?
- Why are men over-represented?
Two main diagnoses of men’s over-representation

1. Focus on women.
   - Because there are not enough qualified women candidates
   - Because women do not vote for women

2. Focus on the institutions and parties.
   - The political parties are the gatekeepers to elected positions.
   - Why are parties not more inclusive in terms of women and minorities? ‘Old boy’s network’
Two discourses on women’s under-representation in political institutions

• *The incremental track discourse:*

1. Problem-diagnosis
   Women’s lack of resources and old prejudice

2. Goal
   ‘More women in politics’

3. Strategy
   Increase women’s resources and commitment

4. General perception of the cause of history:
   Equal representation may take decades, but will eventually be achieved in due course as the country develops.
The fast track discourse:

1. Problem-diagnosis
   Exclusion and discrimination

2. Goal
   ‘Gender balance in politics’

3. Strategy
   Affirmative actions, electoral gender quotas

4. General perception of the cause of history:
   Women’s representation does not increase by some historical necessity. Backlash may even be possible.

The over 30%- countries

- In the 1990s only 5 countries over 30%, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.

- In 2015 45 countries over 30%, 46 incl. Scotland

“Saturation without parity”

- Recent decrease or stagnation: Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Scottish parliament
Class ceiling smashed?

• From 1980s and 90s, women have obtained a share of the higher positions within Nordic parliaments corresponding to their number of MPs.

• The law of increasing disproportions – no longer in parliament, but still at local council level - and in academia and business.
Concepts

• Affirmative action, positive action, temporary special measures, quotas

• *If everything in society was fair, there were no need affirmative actions. But in all countries there are direct as well as indirect discrimination (structural barriers) against women.*

• Quotas are not discrimination of men, but compensation for present barriers women meet in politics
Three main types of gender quotas in politics

• 1. *Party quotas*, adopted by individual parties in a country (setting % of the candidates)

• 2. *Candidate quotas by law*, binding for all parties (setting % of the candidates)

• 3. *Reserved seat* quotas by law (number of the elected – guaranteed seats for women or minorities)

• (4. Financial incentives)
Importance of the electoral system

- A proportional representation system (PR) with party lists with many candidates is more favorable to increasing women’s representation.

- Majoritarian systems (FPTP) with only one candidate to be elected (and only one candidate per party or individual parties) disfavor women.

- PR tends to give higher representation for women and is easier to combine with a quota system.
Defining quotas

- Gender quotas are an equality policy measure (affirmative action).

- Quotas imply setting a fixed goal for the recruitment of women or other under-represented groups in order to rapidly change an unwanted inequality.

- Quotas may be gender neutral or for women.
Sanctions for non-compliance:

• *legal quota systems:*

• 1. Rejection of the list (Costa Rica, Spain, Slovenia, East Timor, France at the local level) – the most effective

• 2. Financial penalty (France at the national level, (Portugal)

• (3. Financial incentives if a party has over a certain number of women as candidates (Giorgia, Ireland) or among the elected (Columbia)
Temorary measure?

1. Institutionalized parity.
France: ”Only women and men together can define the common good”.

or

2. Temporary measure?
2.1. Sunset clause: e.g. until 2020 or 2030 or
2.2. To be removed after 3 elections
2.3. Until women reach at least 30 %
Institutionalized Parity in Majority Systems

Political Assembly

50-50

Each constituency/village elects one woman and one man
The example of France

- Majority system: Single member districts in 2 rounds

- Law: All political parties shall nominate 50 % female and 50 % male candidates among all their candidates for the National Assembly – horizontal quota.

- Financial penalty for non-compliance. The big parties did not comply.

- First Election: 19 %, today: 26 %

- Conclusion: 50-50 among the candidates does not necessarily give an gender balanced result, because the political parties may nominate women in their weakest constituencies.

- 50-50 % of the winnable seats?
The amazing example of Bolivia

• Mixed electoral system.
• From 25% (2010) to 53 % women (2014) in one election!

• PR election: 60 seats. Parity and alternation; in case of odd numbers priority is given to a woman.
• FPTP election: 70 constituencies. Parity (50% of candidates must be women),
Adding up systems

• Palestine, local. There shall be at least 2 women in any local council.

• If not obtained in the election, the missing 1-2 women are added (from among the running up candidates/the best loosers).

• Scotland: Is it possible to use the regional PR-lists not just to secure proportionality among the political parties, but also according to gender?
Rank-order rules are important

- *Candidate quotas:*
  - 1. Zipper system – alternation
  - 2. The top two cannot be of the same sex (Belgium´+ 50 % for whole list)
  - 3. Twp out of every five on the list. Spain
  - 4. One out of every group of 4 candidates must be a woman (East Timor)
The Paradox of Quota Adoption

• Gender quotas for elections are only about the numerical representation.

• But feminists, who support gender quotas, want women to make a difference in politics,

• while male dominated parliaments have passed quota laws based on mixed motives.
Electoral gender quotas

• Only regulates the descriptive representation (the numbers).

• No miracle cure! Many additional strategies needed.

• But quotas work!
BREAKING MALE DOMINANCE IN OLD DEMOCRACIES

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