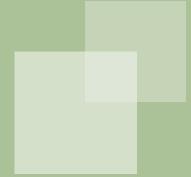


Chapter 4



Drude Dahlerup

Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas

Given the slow speed at which the number of women in politics is growing, different policy measures are being introduced to reach gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism to increase, and safeguard, women's presence in parliaments and are now being introduced all over the world. What are the arguments for and against the use of quotas? What types of quota have led to substantial increase in women's political representation in practice? Which quotas work best in different electoral systems and how can they be effectively enforced? This chapter examines the world of electoral quotas and the ways in which quotas can lead, and have led, to historic leaps in women's political representation.

1. What are Quotas?

Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government. Quotas aim at increasing women's representation in publicly elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils. Gender quotas draw legitimacy from the discourse of exclusion, according to which the main reasons for women's under-representation are the exclusionary practices of the political parties and the political institutions at large. Quotas place the burden of candidate recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process, first and foremost the political parties.¹ Quotas force those who nominate and select to start recruiting women and give women a chance which they do not have today in most parts of the world. The two most common types of electoral gender quotas are candidate quotas and reserved seats.

Candidate quotas specify the minimum percentage of candidates for election that must be women, and apply to political parties' lists of candidates for election. *Legal candidate quotas* are laid down in the constitution, in electoral laws or in political party laws. Such quotas as are enacted in legislation force all political parties to recruit the required percentage of women. *Voluntary party quotas* are adopted voluntarily by political parties, and are most common in centre–left-leaning parties, while liberal and conservative parties generally tend to be reluctant about or strongly opposed to adopting quotas.

Reserved seats set aside a certain number of seats for women among representatives in a legislature, specified either in the constitution or by legislation. One might argue that reserved seats should not be counted among electoral quotas. However, reserved seats today come in many different types, some excluding, others including, the election of women, rather than appointment, to fill these seats. In Uganda 56 seats, one elected in each district by a special electorate, are reserved for women. In Rwanda, 30 percent of the seats, elected by a special procedure, are reserved for women according to the constitution. In Tanzania 20 percent of the seats are reserved for women and allocated to the political parties in proportion to the number of parliamentary seats won in an election. Reserved seats can also be filled by appointment, as in Kenya and some Arab states.

Previous notions of having reserved seats for only one or for very few women, representing a vague and all-embracing category of 'women', are no longer considered sufficient. Today, quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute at least a 'critical minority' of 30 or 40 percent or aim for 'gender balance' as demanded in various international treaties and conventions. Quotas may be seen as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed.

Most quotas aim at increasing women's representation because the problem to be addressed is usually the under-representation of women. This is particularly relevant since women constitute more than 50 percent of the population in most countries, but worldwide they hold less than 16 percent of the parliamentary seats.

Gender-neutral quotas. Quota systems may, however, be constructed as genderneutral. In this case, the requirement may be, for example, that neither gender should occupy more than 60 percent or less that 40 percent of the positions on a party list or in a decision-making body. While quotas for women set a maximum for men's representation, gender-neutral quotas construct a maximum limit for both sexes. Gender-neutral quota rules are sometimes used as a strategic choice in order to refute the arguments of opponents of quotas that they are discriminatory against men. **Quotas as a 'fast track'.** Today we see quotas being introduced where women historically have been almost totally excluded from politics, as in Jordan or Afghanistan. In such cases, gender quotas represent a kick-start for women to gain entry to politics. In other cases, quotas are introduced to consolidate and further strengthen the gains women have made in accessing decision-making positions—or to prevent a backlash. While the Scandinavian countries represent a model of gradual increase in women's representation (see the Dahl quotation below), countries like Argentina, Costa Rica, South Africa and Rwanda represent a new 'fast track model'.²

'One cannot deal with the problem of female representation by a quota system alone. Political parties, the educational system, NGOs, trade unions, churches—all must take responsibility within their own organizations to systematically promote women's participation, from the bottom up. This will take time. It will not happen overnight, or in one year or five years; it will take one or two generations to realize significant change. This is what we are working on in Sweden. We did not start with a quota system. First we laid the groundwork to facilitate women's entry into politics. We prepared the women to ensure they were competent to enter the field; and we prepared the system, which made it a little less shameful for men to step aside. Then we used quotas as an instrument in segments and institutions where we needed a breakthrough.'

Birgitta Dahl, former Speaker of Parliament, Sweden

2. Quotas: Pros and Cons

Various arguments have been put forward for and against the introduction of quotas as a means to increase the political presence of women. The pros and cons are listed below.

2.1. Cons

- Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference.
- Political representation should be a choice between ideas and party platforms, not between social categories.
- Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
- Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications, and that better-qualified candidates are pushed aside.
- Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
- Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.
- Quotas for women will be followed by demands for quotas for other groups, which will result in a politics of sheer group-interest representation.

2.2. Pros

- Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats.
- Quotas imply that there are several women together in a committee or assembly, thus minimizing the stress often experienced by the token women.
- Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.
- Women's experience is needed in political life.
- Men cannot represent the interest of women. Only many women can represent the diversity of women.
- Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.
- Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.
- Quotas do not discriminate against individual men. Rather quota rules limit the tendency of political parties to nominate only men. For the voters, the opportunities are expanded, since it now becomes possible to vote for women candidates.
- Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but only temporarily.
- Several internationally recognized conventions on gender equality have set targets for women's political representation, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which 179 countries are now party to, as well as the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.
- How can it be justified that men occupy more than 80 percent of the parliamentary seats in the world?

The ways in which the problems of women's under-representation are framed have important consequences for what strategies are considered to be relevant. If the problem is discursively constructed as women's limited knowledge or experience, then educating women is seen as the right remedy. If, on the other hand, institutional mechanisms of exclusion are considered to be the main problem, then the burden of change is placed on the institutions and political parties, which are seen as responsible for the discriminatory practices.

2.3. Two Concepts of Equality

In general, quotas for women represent a shift from one concept of equality to another. The classic liberal notion of equality was a notion of 'equal opportunity' or 'competitive equality'. Removing the formal barriers, for example, giving women voting rights, was considered sufficient. The rest was up to the individual women.

Following strong feminist pressure in the last few decades, a second concept of equality is gaining increasing relevance and support—the notion of 'equality of result'. The argument is that just removing formal barriers does not produce real equal opportunity. Direct discrimination, as well as a complex pattern of hidden barriers, prevents women from getting their share of political influence. Quotas and other forms of active equality measures are thus a means towards equality of result. The argument is based on the experience that equality as a goal cannot be reached by formal equal treatment as a means. If barriers exist, it is argued, compensatory measures must be introduced as a means to reach equality of result.

3. The World of Quotas

In 2005, more than 40 countries have introduced electoral quotas by amending the constitution or introducing different types of legislation. In more than 50 other countries, major political parties have voluntarily introduced quotas requiring women to comprise a certain percentage of the candidates they nominate for election. Because of quotas, countries like Argentina, Costa Rica, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa are now contending with the Nordic countries as world leaders, countries which for many decades have topped the ranking in terms of women's parliamentary representation.

An overview over the use of legal electoral quotas is given in table 13. As the table shows, most legal gender quota systems in politics were introduced only during the last decade.

Different types of quota are prominent in the world's regions.³ In Latin America, the leading region in terms of quotas, constitutional or legal changes have opened up the way for gender quotas in politics. In the regions of Africa, the Balkans and South Asia many different types of quotas regimes have been introduced recently. In Western Europe quotas mainly come in the form of voluntary party quotas, but with France and Belgium as exceptions. In Eastern and Central Europe very few parties have passed quota regulations and no legal gender quota regulations for parliament are in place. The legacy of quotas in this region, even if this legacy partly rests on a myth. In the Arab world, quotas as reserved seats for various groups (religious, ethnic and clan) are well known, and very recently a number of countries have included 'women' as a group for whom certain seats should also be reserved.

As a consequence of gender quotas, a dramatic change has taken place recently in the global ranking order of countries based on their level of female political representation. As a result of quota provisions, Rwanda, Costa Rica, Argentina, Mozambique and South Africa are now placed very high in the world league of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The five Nordic states, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which for a long time were virtually alone at the top of the ranking table, are now being challenged.

	Quota Type (in Constitution and/or in Law)**	Year Introduced	Present Quota System (Percentage)	Percentage of Women in Parliament (Most Recent Election)	
Americas					
Argentina	C, L	1991, 1991	30	34.1	(2003)
Bolivia	L	1997	30	18.5	(2002)
Brazil	L	1997	30	8.2	(2002)
Costa Rica	L	1996	40	35.1	(2002)
Dominican Republic	L	1997	25	17.3	(2002)
Ecuador	L	1997	20	16.0	(2002)
Guyana	С	N/A	33	20.0	(2001)
Honduras	L	2000	30	5.5	(2001)
Mexico	L	2002	30	22.6	(2003)
Panama	L	1997	30	9.9	(1999)
Paraguay	L	1996	20	10.0	(2003)
Peru	L	1997	30	17.5	(2001)
Europe Belgium	L	1994	33	35.3	(2003)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	L	2001	33	16.7	(2002)
France	C, L	1999, 2000	50	12.1	(2002)
Macedonia	L	2002	30	17.5	(2002)
Serbia and Montenegro	L	2002	30	7.9	(2003)
Africa and the Middle E Djibouti	ast L	2002	10	10.8	(2003)
Eritrea	С	N/A	30	N/A	(2001)
Jordan	L	2003	6 seats	5.5	(2003)
Kenya	C	1997	6 seats	6.7	(2002)
Morocco	L	2002	30 seats	10.8	(2002)
Rwanda	 C, L	2003	30	48.8	(2003)
Sudan	L	N/A	10	9.7	(2000)
Tanzania	C, L	2000	20–30	22.3	(2000)
Uganda	C, L	1995, 1989	56 seats	24.7	(2001)
Asia					
Afghanistan	С	2004	25	25.0	(2004)
Armenia	L	1999	5	4.6	(2003)
Bangladesh	С	2004	45 seats	2.0	(2001)
Indonesia	L	2003	30	11,0	(2004)
Korea, Democratic Rep.	L	N/A	20	N/A	(2003)
Nepal	C, L	1990, 1990	5	5.9	(1999)
Pakistan	L	2002	60 seats	21.6	(2002)
Philippines	C, L	1995, 1995	20	17.8	(2001)
Taiwan	С	1997	10-25	22.2	(2001)

Table 13: Countries with Constitutional Quota and/or Election Law QuotaRegulation for the National Parliament*

* Lower house or single house in a unicameral legislature. Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Taiwan also have *constitutional* quotas for local and/or regional parliaments. See http://www.quotaproject.org.

** C refers to quota provisions stipulated in the constitution, and L refers to quota provisions stipulated in law.

Source: Dahlerup, Drude and Lenita Freidenvall, 2005. 'Quotas as a "Fast Track" to Equal Representation for *Women'. International Feminist Journal of Politics.* Vol. 7, no. 1, March; and http://www.quotaproject.org>.

3.1. The Nordic Countries

The Nordic countries have for decades had the highest political representation of women in the world. This increase took place largely during the last 30 years. In 2005, women constituted over 45 percent of the members of parliament in Sweden, 38 percent in Finland, 37 percent in Denmark, 36 percent in Norway and 30 percent in Iceland following elections held between 2001 and 2005.

Contrary to common perceptions, no constitutional clause or law demands a high representation of women in Scandinavia. For the most part the increase can be attributed to sustained pressure by women's groups within parties as well as the women's movement in general. Women mobilized and organized to ensure that the political parties increased their number of women candidates, that is to say, women candidates who had a fair chance of winning. The real take-off of the increase in women's representation in the Nordic countries happened in the 1970s before any party-installed candidate quotas.

The pressure to increase women's representation was applied to all political parties in Scandinavia. Some parties, especially centre–left parties, responded by applying voluntary party quotas. In three Scandinavian countries, quotas were introduced based on decisions made by the political parties themselves, first in parties to the left and in the social democratic parties during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Most centre and right-wing parties, however, have considered quotas 'un-liberal'. It was not until 1993 that the Swedish Social Democratic Party introduced the principle of 'every second on the list a woman'. In a 50 : 50 percent quota system like this, the women are no more 'quota women' than the men are 'quota men'.

3.2. Political Parties and Quotas

At elections, the quota system touches the very foundation of the democratic process, and according to opponents it may clash with the principle of the voters' right to choose the representatives they want. However, as chapter 3 has indicated, nominations are the crucial stage and the power of the nominations rests with the political parties, not with the voters. Since the political parties in most countries

are the real gatekeepers to political office, quotas may lead to a dispute between the central and regional/local branches of the political parties. The local branches often fight for their right to choose their own candidates without the interference of the central party organization.

Undoubtedly, it is easier to introduce quotas for women when other forms of quota are also formally introduced, for example, quotas based on occupational or ethnic criteria. Regional 'quotas' which distribute the parliamentary seats to various parts of the country, not just according to their share of the population, but giving non-proportional shares of the seats to certain regions over others, are in fact used in most countries. However, such arrangements are seldom called quotas.

3.3. Transitional States and Parliamentary Turnover

The implementation of a quota system is easier in a new political system than in an older one, where most seats might be 'occupied'. History seems to prove that the implementation of a quota system is made easier in a new political system than in an older one, where most seats might be 'occupied', and consequently a conflict may arise between the interests of new groups and those of the incumbents. In general,

it is less complicated to implement quotas for an appointed post than for an elected one. Also, gender quotas are easier to implement in proportional list systems than in plurality-majority systems, where each party only presents one candidate in each constituency. In post-conflict societies, the international community today is putting strong pressure on the actors of reconstruction to take effective measures to include women. Thus we see gender quotas of 25–35 percent being introduced in strongly patriarchal cultures where very few women were represented earlier, for example, in the post-conflict societies of Afghanistan and Iraq. Quota provisions have also been introduced in the Balkans following strong pressure from the local women's movements in alliance with the international community.

3.4. Token Women?

In India, the 74th constitutional amendment requires that 33 percent of the seats in local elected bodies in the towns and in the countryside (the *panchayats*) are reserved for women. The policy of reservation, as well as of quotas, is a well known, and much disputed, measure in Indian politics. Gender quotas are thus combined with reserved seats for scheduled castes as part of a rotation system, according to which it is decided in advance which category will be allowed to contest for the seat of every ward. This system has resulted in the election of several million Indian women to local councils. The Indian women's movement has mobilized and educated women candidates. Quotas for women in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the national parliament) have been proposed but rejected again and again by the parliament. Bangladesh and

Pakistan have also introduced gender quotas for local councils, as have Namibia, Eritrea, Tanzania and Uganda.

'We have tried reserved parliamentary seats for village panchayats, and from my experience, this is a very effective measure. We have reserved 33 percent of the seats in panchayats for women. Before this policy, we did not have women prepared for leadership positions; but as a result of the policy, political parties have to search for women. We got a mixed response. Some men did not want women to come forward, so they put forward their wives, sistersin-law and mothers. But talented, educated women also came forward. Now the old argument that there are no able women to become candidates for legislative assemblies no longer holds. Because now the women serving as mayors and as chairmen of the municipal committees will be groomed as prospective candidates for parliament. More and more women have been elected to panchayats-and this is a valuable pool of women for legislative assemblies. Thus the reservation of seats is a very effective measure, especially in countries such as India where there is such meager representation of women in parliament. In India, only 6.5 percent of parliamentarians, 39 members of a house of 543, are women. A bill for reservation of seats for women in parliament is also pending; discussions are ongoing. It has not yet passed, but I think it will see the light of day.'

Sushma Swaraj, MP, India

In India, women elected on the basis of quotas have been labelled 'proxy women', because they could be placed in the local council as stand-ins for their husbands, who might even participate in the meetings in their place. In other parts of the world as well, women in politics, especially those elected through quotas, might be seen as 'token women'. Research on 'quota' women has revealed many cases of purely symbolic representation of women, especially if the women elected have no power base in a constituency of their own, or in the parties or in strong movements outside the political institutions. However, there are also many success stories of women who felt totally isolated and powerless in the beginning but eventually gained confidence and influence. It seems to be crucial for the effectiveness of women politicians that capacity-building programmes are offered by women's movements or by international organizations.⁴

'Quotas are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they oblige men to think about including women in decision-making, since men must create spaces for women. On the other hand, since it is men who are opening up these spaces, they will seek out women who they will be able to manage—women who will more easily accept the hegemony of men.'

Anna Balletbo, former MP, Spain

Double standards are at play, however, when women politicians are accused of being too dependent on their parties to which they owe their seat, as if this were not the case for most male politicians as well. Women politicians are also accused of being in politics just because of their family connections—as if this is not the case for male politicians, too, especially in clientelist systems. Even if creating loyal women politicians was no doubt the motive behind some quota reforms, as it was for instance in Pakistan and Peru, token women may not necessarily be the result provided capacity-building and critical support by women's organizations are available for the women elected.

4. The Implementation of Quotas

Quotas rules are not enough. Whether a quota system meets its objective depends largely on the process and method of implementation and enforcement. While reserved seats are by their nature enforceable, candidate quotas are often not enforced. If the method of implementation is not clearly defined and enforceable, a candidate quota requirement of 30, 40 or 50 percent is not likely to be met. The quota must be embedded in the selection and the nomination processes of political parties from the very beginning.

From single-country studies we know, for instance, that the introduction of quotas requiring a minimum of 30 percent of each gender on an electoral list does not automatically result in women winning 30 percent of seats. Political parties may meet requirement that 30 percent of their candidates must be women but place them at the bottom of the lists, in largely unwinnable positions. Additionally, if the number of seats to be filled in a constituency is small and many parties stand for election, by and large men will be elected as they usually hold the top positions on a party list. In some countries using a proportional representation (PR) electoral system with open lists, voters may demote women candidates (or promote male candidates), thereby negating women's chances of election. In other recent cases, however, voters do seem to prefer women candidates, especially on the lists of left-leaning candidates, in which cases open lists with preferential voting possibilities will benefit women candidates.

Rules are not enough. Whether a quota system reaches its objective depends largely on the process of implementation. For these reasons it is crucial that quota systems and their rules for enforcement are introduced that work with the electoral system. Several quota laws have been amended, or today are drafted, with **placement mandates** specifying which positions women are to hold on electoral

lists. The following are examples of quotas that are enforceable in practice.

Iraq. According to section 4(3) of the 2004 electoral law, political parties must place women in every third position on political party lists—'no fewer than 1 out of the first 3 candidates on the list must be a woman, no fewer than 2 out of the first 6

candidates' until the end of the list. As a result, 31 percent of representatives elected in 2005 were women.

Argentina. The 1991 law on quotas requires party lists to have a minimum of 30 percent women among their candidates. Subsequent revisions of the law fixed a minimum number of positions that would have to be accorded to women: one woman where between two and four positions are available; at least two women where between five and eight positions are available; at least three women where between nine and 11 positions are available; and at least four women where 12–14 positions are available. As a result, 34 percent of the representatives elected in 2003 were women.

Sweden. Several political parties, including the Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Green Party, have adopted 'zipper' lists where a list of male candidates is 'zipped' or alternated with a list of female candidates, resulting in women in every 'other' position on the party list.

However, too often scant attention is paid to enforcement of the quota system. This may be because of an underlying perception that quotas are supposed to be purely symbolic, or because the connection between the goals of a policy and the measures needed to implement it has been overlooked. Some general rules can be considered.

1. The type of quota system needs to be compatible with the electoral system in use.

2. Rules about the ranking order of the candidates, or placement mandates, are essential for the implementation of candidate quotas.

3. Sanctions for non-compliance are very important. Appropriate authority must be given to the implementation agency, such as the electoral management body, to reject candidate lists that do not comply with the requirements. In the case of voluntary party quotas, a high-level organ within political parties should be tasked with ensuring compliance.

Without specifications regarding the ranking of candidates on party lists, as well as sanctions for non-compliance, quota provisions may be merely symbolic. On the other hand, where electoral gender quotas have fulfilled these qualifications, they have proved extremely effective in increasing the political representation of women the world over.

5. In Summary

1. The aim of quota systems is to increase considerably the political representation of women.

- 2. Successful quota systems lead to:
- the active recruitment of women by political parties in order to have a sufficient number of qualified candidates to fulfil the quota;
- a larger minority of women, rather than a token few, who will be able to influence political norms and culture; and
- women having the possibility to influence the decision-making process as individuals or with specific points of view and concerns.

3. It is not sufficient to pass rules that ensure women 30 percent of the seats. The next step of implementing quotas is critical. With respect to implementation, the following should be kept in mind.

- The more vague the regulations, the higher the risk that the quota regulations will not be properly implemented. Quotas for candidates do not automatically lead to the election of more women.
- Pressure from women's organizations and other groups is necessary for the successful implementation of quotas.
- There must be sanctions for non-compliance with the quota requirement.

4. Contrary to what many supporters of quotas believed or hoped for, in quite a lot of countries conflicts over quotas for women seem to return again and again with each electoral cycle. In other countries where there had been vehement discussions about the introduction of quotas, the conflicts died down once the quota system was in place. But in still other parts of the world, gender quotas have been introduced after almost no controversy at all.

5. It is important to remember that quotas for women do not remove all barriers for women in politics. Stigmatization of women politicians may even increase in quota systems. Difficulties combining family life, work life and politics still remain a severe obstacle to women's full citizenship. Further, political representation cannot stand alone, but must be complemented with necessary socio-economic changes in society at large.

Although there is no single remedy for increasing women's presence in parliament, the discussions on quotas and electoral systems point to some important options. Some countries have refined certain approaches as a result of trial and error and long years of experimentation. By making these experiences available to women around the world, we hope to provide some guidelines and directions for future trials in this field. In the next chapter, we look at the women already in parliament and discuss what they can do to enhance their effectiveness.

Notes

- ¹ Dahlerup, Drude and Lenita Freidenvall, 2005. 'Quotas as a "Fast Track" to Equal Representation for Women'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 26–48.
- ² Dahlerup and Freidenwall 2005, op. cit.
- ³ Electoral gender quotas in all major regions of the world are compared in Dahlerup, Drude (ed.), forthcoming 2006. *Women, Quotas and Politics.* London: Routledge.
- ⁴ The 'effectiveness' of women politicians is discussed further in Dahlerup, forthcoming 2006 (op. cit.), and in Hassim, Shireen, 2003. 'Representation, Participation and Democratic Effectiveness: Feminist Challenges to Representative Democracy in South Africa', in A. M. Goetz and S. Hassim (eds). *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making*. London: Zed Books, pp. 81–109.

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- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 'Women in National Parliaments', available at <http://www.ipu.org>
- A series of country case studies on electoral quotas collected by International IDEA is available at International IDEA and Stockholm University, Global Database of Electoral Quotas for Women, available at http://www.quotaproject.org/case_studies.cfm
- A series of working papers on quotas produced by Stockholm University is available at http://www.statsvet.su.se/quotas