Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide

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In recent years, countries around the world have witnessed a surge of interest in patterns of political representation. At the empirical level, political transformations around the world have stimulated reflection on questions of institutional and constitutional design. In Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa, reformers have sought to devise new political arrangements in light of democratic transition and economic crisis. In Western Europe, pressures for devolution have culminated in the creation of new regional bodies which, along with increased European integration, have forced governments to recognize an emerging system of multi-level governance. At the theoretical level, scholars have challenged the dominant conventions of liberal democracy by rethinking the means and ends of the political process. Rather than viewing the political as a neutral arena, in which all citizens play an equal role, these theorists argue that liberal political arrangements create systematic distortions in public policies, as well as the potential for equal political engagement. Alternatives they propose include civic republicanism, deliberative democracy, and multiculturalism, all of which promote a notion of equality in a context of difference.

These developments, both empirical and theoretical, have led to various innovations in political participation. The most common reforms, from a global perspective, have been provisions for the increased representation of women. Today, nearly all countries in the world have pledged to promote gender-balanced decision-making.¹ More than eighty have seen the adoption of quotas for the selection of female candidates, and more than twenty more have initiated quota debates over the last ten years.² These quota provisions fall into three broad categories: reserved seats, policies that set aside a certain number of seats in parliament for women; political party quotas, party-specific measures that aim at increasing the proportion of women among party candidates or elected representatives; and national legislative quotas, policies that require political parties to nominate a certain percentage or proportion of women among their candidates. Although some of these measures were adopted as early as the 1950s, the overwhelming majority have emerged only since the mid-1990s, leading many

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¹In September 1995, the 189 member states of the United Nations unanimously signed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women. Section G outlines two core objectives: to take measures to ensure women’s equal access and full participation in power structures and decision-making, and to increase women’s capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. See United Nations 1995.

²Details on these policies are available on-line in the Global Database of Quotas for Women at [http://www.idea.int/quota](http://www.idea.int/quota).
to associate the rapid diffusion of candidate gender quotas\textsuperscript{3} with international trends and, especially, to accord a central causal role to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.\textsuperscript{4} Proponents of this view argue that this conference not only brought together women’s groups from all over the globe who then returned home and initiated quota debates in their own countries, but that its conclusions in favor of gender-balanced decision-making also contributed to the broader spread of gender quotas by leading other international organizations to follow suit, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Socialist International, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Commonwealth, the Southern African Development Community, and the Organization of American States.\textsuperscript{5}

At its core, this account views alliances between national women’s movements, transnational women’s activists, and international organizations as responsible for the spread of gender quotas around the world. A closer look at quota campaigns, however, suggests that national campaigns interact in a number of different ways with international and transnational trends. I identify at least four causal patterns with regard to the international and transnational influences on national quota debates: cases where the international community is directly involved in quota debates, sometimes but not always in cooperation with local women’s movements and transnational non-governmental organizations; cases where demonstration effects spur quota campaigns via transnational information sharing, through international conferences, academic works, or personal contacts; cases where international events act as catalysts to domestic debates already in progress, rather than as an

\textsuperscript{3} Throughout this paper I employ the term ‘candidate gender quotas,’ although these measures are more accurately ‘candidate sex quotas.’ Following a distinction made in a great deal of feminist research, ‘sex’ refers to biological differences between women and men, while ‘gender’ refers to social values given to these biological differences. Quota provisions vary in the extent to which they suppose a link between descriptive representation, based on sex, and substantive representation, based on gender. Although my study focuses on descriptive representation, I adopt the term ‘gender quota’ in order to retain consistency with the larger literature, which has tended to use ‘gender quotas’ to refer to ‘sex quotas.’ I am thankful to Sarah Childs for drawing my attention to this important point.


initial inspiration for these campaigns; and cases where international organizations are pivotal to the rejection of quotas, despite mobilization by local women’s groups and transnational NGO’s in support of these measures. Drawing on examples from both developed and developing countries and from quota campaigns both before and after 1995, I conclude that various configurations of national, international, and transnational actors combine to promote or thwart the adoption of candidate gender quotas. I call on scholars, consequently, to move away from simple accounts of diffusion and to recognize instead the multiple processes shaping the spread of gender quotas worldwide.

The adoption of candidate gender quotas: conventional explanations

Although candidate gender quotas are still a relatively new phenomenon, research on quotas has grown exponentially in the last few years. Taken as a whole, this emerging literature identifies four basic accounts as to who supports quota policies and why quotas are adopted for elections to parliament: women mobilize for the adoption of gender quotas to increase women’s representation, political elites recognize strategic advantages for supporting gender quotas, quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation, and quotas are supported by international norms and are spread through transnational sharing. I review the evidence supporting and contradicting each of these narratives, and I reconcile these claims by noting that the four causal stories capture distinct elements of specific quota campaigns and thus do not necessarily operate in all places at all times. More accurately, individual quota campaigns engage multiple causal narratives, variously incorporating actors and strategies at the local, national, international, and transnational levels. I argue that the key to situating single cases within the wider universe of quota campaigns lies in the international and transnational dimensions of domestic quota debates which are, to date, the most under-theorized of all four causal accounts.

Women mobilize for the adoption of gender quotas to increase women’s representation.

One of the most ubiquitous causal stories about the adoption of candidate gender quotas views women as the source of quota proposals. These scholars argue that efforts to nominate more

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6 Most research on quotas centers on elections to national parliaments and, as such, is the main focus of this paper. Nonetheless, candidate gender quotas may exist for a variety of other political offices, including internal party positions, local council elections, and regional or provincial elections. Literature on these types of quotas includes Davidson-Schmich 2002; Guldvik 2003; Holli, Luhtakallio, and Raevaara 2003; Jones 1998; Leijenaar 1997; Reyes 2002.
women never occur without the prior mobilization of women, even when male elites are ultimately responsible for the decision to establish quotas. Various groups of women, however, may be responsible for articulating quota demands, including grassroots women’s movements who work both nationally and internationally to promote women’s political participation; cross-partisan networks among women who make connections with each other through national and international women’s gatherings, or through transnational women’s networks; women’s organizations inside political parties who propose specific quota policies or draw on gains made by women in other parties to press for changes within their own parties; individual women inside political parties who lobby male leaders to promote female candidates; and women involved with the national women’s machinery who support gender quotas as a means of accomplishing their broader goal of women-friendly policy change.

While efforts to nominate more women rarely occur in the absence of women’s mobilization, however, this literature largely ignores the many women who oppose quota policies. Indeed, evidence from numerous cases reveals that women as a group are frequently divided as to the desirability of quotas, with some of the strongest opposition coming from feminists, both inside and outside the political parties, who argue that quotas do not further the cause of female

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11 Chama 2001; Costa Benavides 2003; García Quesada 2003; Jones 1996.

12 Stevenson 2000.
empowerment. This resistance to quotas takes on a variety of different forms, ranging from limited grassroots mobilization to active denouncements by prominent female politicians. Further, even when a large number of women support gender quotas, their proposals still rarely gain consideration until they are embraced by at least one well-placed elite man who pressures his own party, or his own colleagues in parliament, to approve quotas for women. Before such leaders come out in favor of quotas, such measures are often not considered or are simply ridiculed as a demand made by a few hysterical women.

Political elites recognize strategic advantages for supporting gender quotas.

A second common account focuses on political elites and the strategic advantages they perceive for adopting candidate gender quotas. While this story also comes in a number of different versions, it basically centers on the role of male elites in blocking or opening up opportunities for women to run for political office. In contrast to the previous causal narrative, which pinpoints different groups of women and their common motivation for pursuing gender quotas, literature in this vein highlights roughly the same group of elites and the variety of different reasons they embrace quota reform. On the top of the list is party competition, or contagion, with scholars observing that political parties often adopt quotas after one of their rivals establishes them, setting in motion either a ‘virtuous circle’ where all parties adopt, apply, and even increase quotas, or a ‘vicious cycle’ where no parties move at all to recruit more female candidates. These effects are


14 García Quesada 2003.


16 Schmidt 2003a.


18 Bruhn 2003; Caul 2001c; Meier forthcoming; Steiningger 2000.

19 Davidson-Schmich 2002.
often heightened when political parties are seeking to overcome a long period in opposition or a dramatic decrease in popularity by, among other things, closing a gap in support among female voters.

Studies, however, identify a number of other strategic reasons that political elites adopt gender quotas, including promoting female candidates in order to overcome a perceived crisis in representation, to win an electoral campaign, or to sustain an existing regime. In both scenarios, elite support for gender quotas usually involves empty gestures, with quotas representing a relatively easy way of demonstrating commitment to women’s rights without necessarily altering existing patterns of political representation. Indeed, numerous scholars suggest that quota measures are often passed nearly unanimously, because party and legislative elites perceive that quota policies will not affect them, will never be implemented, or will be deemed unconstitutional or illegal before they can ever be applied. Recent work finds that elites also respond to a range of non-electoral incentives, like the possibility to apply quotas as a means of consolidating control over party representatives and political rivals. In these cases, elites draw on


21 A good example is the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico. See Stevenson 2000.


25 Examples include Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Rajiv Gandhi in India, Carlos Menem in Argentina, and Anwar Sadat in Egypt. See Chama 2001; Durrieu 1999; Howard-Merriam 1990; Rai 2002; Schmidt 2003a; Schmidt 2003c.

26 Craske 1999; Htun 2002a; Htun and Jones 2002.

27 Baldez forthcoming; Durrieu 1999; Opello 2002; Rai 1999.


quotas to hand-pick ‘malleable’ women who will not challenge the patriarchal status quo, or to institutionalize procedures for candidate selection that enforce central party decisions. Where quotas take the form of reserved seats, further, such provisions provide parties with a crucial resource for building alliances with potential coalition partners or for strengthening their base in parliament. In a somewhat similar fashion, local and national courts sometimes lend their support to quotas in an effort to demonstrate their autonomy from other branches of government.

While a great deal of evidence supports the argument that elites respond to strategic incentives when they adopt gender quotas, this research as a whole is largely silent on the fact that quota proposals in these and other cases often meet with fierce opposition, particularly among party leaders and male politicians. Indeed, rather than outspoken and pragmatic convergence on the issue of gender quotas, many parties either deliberately abstain from taking public positions for or against quotas; adopt quotas, but do not publicize this policy widely; or engage in acrimonious debate both within and across their own parties as to the desirability of adopting quotas for women. Even as parties in some countries become more aware of the exclusion of women, many still remain reluctant to implement quotas, choosing in some cases to disregard women’s demands.

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32 Baldez forthcoming; Bruhn 2003.
33 Chowdhury 2002.
35 Baldez forthcoming.
37 Araújo 2003; Meier 2000c; Schmidt 2003a; Sgier 2003.
38 Baldez forthcoming; Bruhn 2003.
40 de Diop 2002; Erickson 1998.
and in other cases to adopt only non-quota measures to facilitate women’s political candidacy.\textsuperscript{41} Various studies, further, cast doubt on many of the specific strategic incentives outlined in this literature. Most notably, scholars find that increased party competition more often works against the selection of female candidates, as parties uncertain about electoral outcomes fall back on more traditional male politicians,\textsuperscript{42} while lack of party competition sometimes facilitates women’s recruitment, as single party regimes seek to include a wide array of social groups as a way of gaining social legitimacy.\textsuperscript{43} At the same time, studies suggest that elite strategies are not exclusively pragmatic, but may in fact reflect normative concerns. In certain countries, for example, elites engage in repeated attempts to improve women’s access to political office, establishing party quotas because of failure to establish national quotas,\textsuperscript{44} passing national quotas after failure to implement party quotas,\textsuperscript{45} pursuing national quotas because of successes with party quotas,\textsuperscript{46} or increasing party quotas because of the establishment of national quotas.\textsuperscript{47} Recent work, finally, finds that elites frequently espouse gender quotas not as an effort to consolidate control, but as a response to internal party struggles initiated among the rank-and-file, as women inside the party draw on electoral competition to strengthen their position for reforming party statutes,\textsuperscript{48} make alliances with a rising reformist party faction,\textsuperscript{49} or imitate tactics employed by women inside other political parties to gain leadership support for gender quotas.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{41}Non-quota measures range from informal targets regarding the nomination of female candidates to the provision of political training for prospective female candidates. See among others Caul 2001c; Davidson-Schmich 2002; Freidenvall 2003; Htun 2002; Steininger 2000.

\textsuperscript{42}Bruhn 2003; Green 2003; Randall 1982; Stevenson 2000.

\textsuperscript{43}Goetz 1998; Goetz and Hassim 2003; Lovenduski 1981; Nechemias 1994.

\textsuperscript{44}Stevenson 2000.

\textsuperscript{45}Mossuz-Lavau 1998a.

\textsuperscript{46}Araújo 2003; Meier 2000c.

\textsuperscript{47}Meier forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{48}Krook 2002bs; Langston 2001.

\textsuperscript{49}Caul 2001b.

\textsuperscript{50}Bruhn 2003.
Quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation.

A third causal story for the adoption of candidate gender quotas asserts that quotas are simply an extension of existing or emerging notions of equality and representation. This normative consistency, again, takes on a number of different forms, depending on how quota provisions mesh with reigning conceptions of equality and representation. One explanation equates quota adoption with ideas about equality and fair access, noting that quotas in left-wing parties match their more general goals of social equality and grassroots decision-making.51 A second account, in contrast, interprets quotas for women as a logical extension of other types of representational guarantees meant to recognize difference and the need for proportional representation.52 These provisions may cover groups based on language, religion, race, ethnicity, youth, or occupation,53 and typically spring from attempts to safeguard the participation of vulnerable groups54 or to redefine citizenship in more inclusive or multicultural directions.55 A third school of thought, finally, views quota adoption in the context of democratic innovation, observing that demands for quotas frequently emerge during periods of democratic transition or the creation of new democratic institutions. In these cases, quotas for women are included in broader packages of political reform,56 in order both to guarantee the representation of traditionally under-privileged groups and to establish national and international legitimacy for the new regime.57

While these accounts are correct in observing connections between quotas and broader political ideals, new research casts doubt on these explanations by noting that proposals for gender quotas often encounter fierce opposition among a wide range of domestic groups. In countries

53 Bih-er, Clark, and Clark 1990; Bird 2003; Lijphart 1986; Meier 2000a; Meier 2000c; Safran 1994.
54 Chowdhury 2002; Jenkins 1999.
where quotas are framed as a means for promoting equality and fair access, for example, proposals to institute special policies for women often meet with strong negative reactions, with detractors arguing against quotas on the grounds that quotas for women discriminate against men and, ultimately, hurt both women and men by illegitimately restricting voters’ freedom to elect their own candidates. In some instances, opponents challenge quotas on the grounds that quotas are unconstitutional or illegal, because they contravene principles of equality as established by the constitution or by the legal code, or on the grounds that quotas are unnecessary, because women and men are considered equal by the law and by the general public. In countries where quotas are introduced as a question of recognizing difference and proportional representation, proposed quotas for women interact in a variety of different ways with claims for the representation of other groups. Some governments acknowledge a range of different groups, while others recognize gender as a relevant category, but not class, race, or ethnicity, and yet others recognize groups based on class, race, ethnicity, language, or religion, but not gender. These patterns lead groups to compete among each other for the various normative and material benefits associated with acknowledgment of group identity, competition which sometimes precludes group recognition altogether, as governments avoid adopting quotas for one group out of concerns that this will escalate claim-making by other groups. In countries undergoing democratic innovation, finally, reformers many times reject special provisions for women, particularly in cases where the former regime applied gender quotas as a means of gaining social legitimacy. Opponents in these instances frame quotas as fundamentally anti-democratic and thus contrary to the spirit of the transition.

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60 Christensen and Damkjør 1998.
63 Jenkins 1999.
64 de Diop 2002; Klausen and Maier 2001; Scott 1998.
Quotas are supported by international norms and are spread through transnational sharing.

A fourth and final causal narrative explaining the adoption of gender quotas centers on the role of international norms and transnational information sharing. While varied in focus, these accounts all call attention to actors beyond the nation-state and their part in the rapid diffusion of candidate gender quotas around the globe. These researchers locate the origin of gender quotas in international recommendations, negotiated during the course of international meetings and conferences, which commit member-state governments to finding ways for improving women’s access to political decision-making. Two of the most important documents in this regard are the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, passed in 1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA, approved in 1995), both elaborated within the framework of the United Nations. In recent years, other international organizations have followed suit and issued similar recommendations embracing quotas for women. At the same time, these scholars note, numerous transnational actors have emerged and served as catalysts to the rapid spread of quota policies around the world, particularly in the years following the UN’s Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995. These actors include non-governmental organizations, groups formed under the auspices of international institutions, and formal and informal networks among scholars, activists, and politicians.

By sharing information across national borders, these groups enable domestic campaigns to learn new tactics for reform and import strategies from other countries into their own. The process of exchange, however, sometimes also contributes to the spread of

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66 Bataille and Gaspard 1999; Camacho Granados et al 1997; Dahlerup 2002; González Arica 1998; Htun 2002a; Htun 2002b; Htun and Jones 2002; Krook 2003; Krook forthcoming-b; Leijenaar 1997; Lubertino Beltrán 1992; Peschard 2002; Schmidt 2003b; Stevenson 2000; Yáñez 2001; United Nations Office in Vienna 1992. The role of the United Nations in promoting women’s political participation, however, goes back as far as the 1940s, when the General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution 56 (1) recommending that all member states adopt measures to grant women the same political rights as men in order to fulfill the aims of the UN Charter. The UN’s Commission on the Status of Women also convened international seminars to increase the participation of women in public life in 1957, 1959, and 1960. See United Nations 1966; United Nations 1968; United Nations 1995.

67 Commission of the European Communities 2000; de Diop 2002; Krook 2002a; Krook 2003; Leijenaar 1997; Lovecy 2000; Lovecy 2001; Lubertino Beltrán 1992, Lubertino 2003; Nordlund 2003; Pintat 1998; Southern African Development Community 1999; Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men 1992; Tripp 2001. In September 2003, the Council of Europe even passed a regulation whereby every country had to include at least one woman in its delegation. Malta still sent an all-male delegation and, consequently, its voting rights have been suspended until the matter is rectified. See Bonici 2004.

68 For examples of such groups, see Krook 2003.
misinformation, like the myth that quotas are responsible for the high proportions of women in parliament in the Nordic countries.\footnote{For many years, the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden – occupied five of the top six spots in the world in terms of women’s parliamentary representation, ranging between 35 and 43% until the most recent elections. Today women’s representation in the lower house of parliament is 45.3% in Sweden (rank=2), 38.0% in Denmark (rank=3), 37.5% in Finland (rank=4), 36.4% in Norway (rank=5), and 30.2% in Iceland (rank=13). This compares to a world average today of 15.3%. See Inter-Parliamentary Union 2004a; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2004b.} Despite efforts by Nordic scholars to dispel this myth by arguing that quotas in these countries have typically been adopted only after women have increased their numbers in parliament,\footnote{Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2003; Freidenvall 2003.} these countries are frequently referenced by many scholars, activists, and politicians around the world as a central example of the need for and success of quotas in producing changes in patterns of political representation.\footnote{See among many others Gidengil 1996; Phillips 1991; Phillips 1995. Such pronouncements are also common in documents issued by international organizations.}

Although gender quotas are frequently adopted in the wake of recommendations issued by international organizations, however, this literature rarely traces the explicit causal connections between international and transnational trends and domestic quota campaigns. Instead, most scholars mention these effects only in passing and limit their observations to a restricted number of well-known international and transnational events, like the Beijing Platform for Action produced at the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women. A closer look at certain individual studies, nonetheless, reveals a host of less systematic references to influences beyond the nation-state. In post-conflict societies, for example, international actors often play a direct role in pressing for the adoption of quotas for women.\footnote{Krook 2003.} In other cases, campaigns originate in lesser-known processes of transnational learning and develop locally before international conferences establish the legitimacy of quotas as a measure to increase women’s political representation.\footnote{Lubertino Beltrán 1992; Schmidt 2003a.} In these and other instances, international events act as catalysts to domestic campaigns already in progress, rather than as initial inspirations for these campaigns.\footnote{Araújo 2003; García Quesada 2003; Stevenson 2000; YáZez 2003.} Finally, in some contexts, international actors are in fact pivotal
to the rejection – rather than the promotion – of quotas as a measure to foster women’s political representation.\footnote{Ciezadlo 2003; Pires 2002.}

Conclusions

Research on candidate gender quotas is relatively new, but it has already generated four distinct causal accounts with regard to the actors and motivations behind quota adoption. These stories apparently contradict one another, privileging grassroots movements or elite actors, and local and national projects or international and transnational trends. Each of the narratives, however, emerges from a limited range of cases, suggesting that the four causal stories do not necessarily operate in all places at all times. Treating quota adoption as a global phenomenon, I propose that these stories may in fact form part of a larger sequence of events: women’s mobilization may precede and influence elite decision-making, while international and transnational norms may affect democratic innovation at the local and national levels. At the same time, elite decision-making in one region may shape the development of global norms which, in turn, may influence women’s movements in another region to mobilize for change. I argue, therefore, for conceiving these narratives as parts of multiple causal trajectories, crossing regions and unfolding over extended periods of time. This approach not only recognizes that individual campaigns may follow distinct paths to quota reform,\footnote{Bruhn 2003; Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2003.} but it also calls attention to the international and transnational dimensions of all quota campaigns. To facilitate comparative analysis, I identify four international and transnational influences on domestic quota debates – international pressure, transnational emulation, international catalysts, and international blockage – which, I contend, explain the trajectory of national quota campaigns, as well as the rapid diffusion of gender quotas worldwide.

The diffusion of candidate gender quotas: international and transnational influences

International and transnational dynamics influence national quota debates in at least four ways: international actors impose quotas on national actors, transnational sharing inspires national quota campaigns, international events tip the balance in national quota debates, and international actors block the adoption of national quotas. In elaborating each of these four causal stories, I draw
on a range of examples that are normally associated with processes of diffusion, as well as several cases that are rarely viewed from this perspective. Although I address each account as analytically separate, these dynamics sometimes intersect, as in cases where transnational emulation and international catalysts combine to facilitate quota adoption or, alternatively, international blockage frustrates transnational emulation to remove quotas from the political agenda.

*International pressure and domestic quota campaigns*

International pressure influences domestic quota campaigns to the extent that international actors are directly involved in quota adoption, either by making the decision to apply quotas or by compelling local leaders to make this same decision themselves. While the international community often exerts this pressure in cooperation with local women’s movements and transnational non-governmental organizations, sometimes it acts in a more unilateral fashion and imposes quotas despite women’s opposition or lack of mobilization in favor of such measures. Empirically, this dynamic is mainly present in post-conflict societies, where international bodies have not only assumed a central role in post-conflict reconstruction, but have also become more heavily involved in electoral processes over the last 25 years.\(^{77}\) Quotas have been adopted in post-conflict societies without the intervention of international actors,\(^ {78}\) but international efforts to promote women’s representation in such countries have grown in recent years, especially since the passage of UN Resolution 1325 in October 2000 calling on member states to ensure women’s participation in post-conflict regimes.\(^ {79}\) Even with this mandate, however, the United Nations usually acts in conjunction with other international organizations when it actively supports quotas as a measure for increasing women’s representation.

Two recent examples of this dynamic are Kosovo and Afghanistan, where different combinations of international actors effectively pressed for the inclusion of women in the emerging post-conflict regimes. After the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, the UN Security Council authorized the creation of the UN Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and, in an

\(^{77}\) Maley 2004.

\(^{78}\) Examples include Mozambique, South Africa, and Uganda. See Ballington and Matland 2004; Hassim 2002; Goetz and Hassim 2003; Tripp 2000.

unusual step, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) assumed a central role in the UN-led mission in the areas of democracy-building and human rights. Discovering that many women did not have adequate documentation to register as voters or as candidates, these authorities decided in October 2000 to introduce UNMIK Regulation 39 establishing a 30% quota for women among the first fifteen candidates on party lists for all local and national elections. UNMIK did not hold any public meetings with local or transnational actors in Kosovo before passing the quota regulation, choosing instead simply to replicate the provision adopted in Bosnia several months earlier, where international officials had extensive contact with local women’s groups and the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, a transnational group formed by female activists, experts, and politicians from Southeastern Europe in cooperation with the European Union. The passage of this regulation provoked both international and local resistance, with some UN officials expressing concern that Kosovar society was not ready for such a measure and local political elites arguing that they would never be able to find enough competent women to meet the quota. This opposition, however, was overcome by strong support from the OSCE and from political and NGO women in Kosovo, who worked to ensure that the quota was applied. Although all the political parties managed to find enough women to put on their candidate lists, nonetheless, some female candidates chose to resign their posts after the local elections in 2000, voicing their opinion that the

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81 Corrin 2002. The same quota was passed in Bosnia in April 2000 and was further refined by a new electoral law in August 2001, which specified the minimum positions on party lists where women must be placed: at least one minority gender candidate among the first two candidates, two among the first five, three among the first eight, etc. Serbia (2002) and Macedonia (2002) have also passed quota laws, but these have been the product of national campaigns without the extensive involvement of international actors. Quotas have been proposed but rejected in Slovenia (1996), Croatia (1999), Bulgaria (2001), Albania (2001), and Montenegro (2002), largely because of disunity among women’s groups across the political parties and weak support from women’s organizations in civil society. See Lokar 2003; Rukavina et al 2002.
84 Ballington and Matland 2004; Lyth 2001; Pires 2004.
quota system was an instrument imposed by the international community and one that did not actually guarantee equality between women and men.\(^{86}\)

In Afghanistan, the most recent end to conflict in 2001 generated similar pressures for the inclusion of women. The United Nations was already present in this country in the form of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), which had been established in December 1993 following two peace accords that temporarily ended many years of civil war. After the overthrow of the Taliban regime, the UN convened the Petersberg Conference\(^{87}\) in December 2001 to set the milestones for Afghanistan’s return to democratic government. Given widespread awareness of violations to women’s rights under the Taliban, the Petersberg Agreements mandated that the interim government and the Loya Jirga Commission were to ensure the participation of women in both the new government and parliament. In addition, two women were designated ministers in the interim government and three women were appointed to the Loya Jirga Commission, due to massive pressure from UNSMA, the UN, and the United States.\(^{88}\) As a consequence, the new Afghan constitution, approved in January 2004, requires each province to send at least one female representative to the Loya Jirga, establishing a 25% quota for women in the lower house of parliament, and calls for the president to appoint women to half of the appointed seats in the Senate, creating a 17% quota for women in the upper house of parliament.\(^{89}\) Despite international consensus on the importance of women’s representation, Afghan women themselves were divided as to the desirability of quotas, with many women inside Afghanistan viewing quotas as unrealizable and even dangerous and many women in the Afghan exile community demanding quotas as a measure to ensure women’s participation in the new regime.\(^{90}\)

\(^{86}\) Nordlund 2003.

\(^{87}\) This conference is also known as the Bonn Conference, and Petersberg Agreement and Bonn Agreement are often used interchangeably.

\(^{88}\) Bauer 2002.

\(^{89}\) Gall 2004; Kaufman 2003.

\(^{90}\) Bauer 2002.
Transnational emulation is a *sine qua non* of many domestic quota campaigns, since most quota debates begin through some form of information sharing across national borders, be it through international conferences, academic works, or personal contacts. While some instances of sharing are truly global, with participants coming together from all over the world for meetings of the United Nations or the Inter-Parliamentary Union, transmission most commonly occurs across countries with similar languages or across political parties with similar ideologies. The diffusion of quotas across Latin America, for example, stems largely from the common use of Spanish in many countries across region. Women in the first Latin American country to adopt national quotas, Argentina, learned about gender quotas through extensive contacts with women in the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and with women in Costa Rica mobilizing for the Bill on Real Equality between Women and Men, before they lobbied legislators to pass a national quota law in 1991. After the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Argentina itself became an important model within the region, being the subject of a series of meetings among Latin American female politicians in 1995, which later culminated in the adoption of quota laws in fourteen Latin American countries in 1996, 1997, and 2000. The spread of quotas across Western Europe, in contrast, springs in part from connections among socialist and social democratic parties within the region. Although very few case studies explicitly address transnational effects, various authors mention such influences in passing, referring to quotas in the Norwegian Labour Party in the decision by the German Social Democratic Party to adopt quotas, or the example of socialist parties around Europe in the decision by the British Labour Party to adopt all-women shortlists. European socialists, in turn, helped effect a change within the Socialist International, which now promotes the use of quotas by its

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92 Htun 2002; Htun and Jones 2002.

93 For a brief overview of these policies, see [http://www.oas.org/CIM/English/Laws-Cuota.htm](http://www.oas.org/CIM/English/Laws-Cuota.htm).

94 Case studies on France are the only ones that consistently mention the importance of international and transnational factors, in large part because activities within the Council of Europe enabled activists to reformulate their demand for quotas into a demand for ‘parity.’ See Hoskyns 1996; Leijenaar 1997; Lovecy 2001; Wisler 1998; Scott 1998.

95 Wisler 1998.
affiliates in countries around the world. A third common means of transnational sharing, and one which frequently intersects with the other two tendencies, takes place through individual contacts and experiences. In Egypt, Anwar Sadat introduced reserved seats for women in 1979 following a trip by his wife Jihan to Sudan, where a quota had already been in effect in for several years. Similarly, feminists in Taiwan initiated a campaign in the late 1990s to transform an existing provision for reserved seats, mandating about 10% female representation, into national and political party quotas of at least 25%, after a leading Taiwanese feminist, Peng Wan-Ru, learned about the notion of ‘critical mass’ from an American feminist, Jo Freedman, during an international women and politics training camp.

Due to these processes of exchange, transnational sharing introduces a more active role for domestic campaigners than in instances of international pressure, international catalysts, and international blockage. Indeed, few cases of emulation reveal direct application of lessons learned, but rather uncover a variety of ways in which actors seek to ‘translate’ quotas to suit specific domestic contexts. The dynamics of translation often take one of two paths: actors reduce long, complex analyses into concise recommendations for action in order to devise their own quota strategies, or actors draw on international examples as inspiration for novel ‘home-grown’ solutions for adopting and applying gender quotas. The first dynamic contributes, among other things, to the propagation of certain myths about the origin and impact of quota policies. Two opposing myths concern the Nordic countries, where increases in women’s representation are inaccurately attributed to gender quotas, and the former Soviet-bloc countries, where high levels of female participation in the

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97 Howard-Merriam 1990.

98 The notion of a ‘critical mass’ argues that for women to have an impact on policy-making, they must constitute a certain proportion of legislators, somewhere between 15 and 40%. The debate over the existence and the importance of a ‘critical mass’ of female legislators is one of the most enduring controversies in the literature on women’s political representation, but it holds important sway in many international documents as a justification for gender quotas. Key contributions on this topic include Dahlerup 1988; Kanter 1977; Thomas 1994. For a critical review of this literature, see Studlar and McAllister 2002.

99 Huang 2002.

100 Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2003.
Communist regime are wrongly attributed to the presence of quota provisions. The Nordic myth has led many to promote gender quotas as a measure for bringing more women into politics, while the Soviet myth has largely delegitimized the pursuit of quotas in countries seeking to overcome their Communist pasts.

The second dynamic produces less systematic results, since ‘home-grown’ solutions may vary enormously across countries and across political parties. One particularly effective example is Rwanda, where women now occupy 48.8% of the seats in the lower house of parliament. After the 1994 genocide, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) came to power after many years of exile in Uganda. As the ruling party, the RPF pressed for provisions to guarantee women’s representation, inspired by their experiences in Uganda, where seats had been reserved for women in parliament since 1989, and their contacts with South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC), where a 30% party quota for women was adopted in 1994. Consequently, they integrated a 30% quota for women in the new Constitution that came into effect in May 2003, in addition to creating two specific mechanisms for promoting women’s participation in all levels of governance as early as 2001. The first innovation was a triple-balloting system at the district level, where voters cast three ballots – a general ballot, a women’s ballot, and a youth ballot. The district council, which forms the basis of all higher-level councils, includes all those elected on the general ballot, one-third of the women, and one-third of the youth. The second innovation was a parallel system of women’s councils and women-only elections to guarantee a venue for representing women’s concerns. While these councils exist parallel to the general councils, the head of each women’s council holds a reserved seat on each general local council in order to ensure official representation of women’s concerns and to provide a link between the two systems. While the idea for gender quotas originated abroad, then, policies for promoting women’s representation in Rwanda present a unique approach for incorporating women into the new regime.

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101 Both myths are addressed at length in Dahlerup forthcoming.

102 Inter-Parliamentary Union 2003; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2004a.

103 Tripp 2000.

104 Hassim 2002.

International catalysts shape domestic quota campaigns already in progress, often tipping the balance in favor of actors mobilizing for quotas by providing new sources of normative leverage in domestic debates. These catalysts include international documents, as well as international meetings, that introduce or popularize new ideas and strategies for increasing women’s representation. The UN’s CEDAW and Beijing PfA, for example, called on governments around the world to foster women’s full and equal participation in public life and proposed various concrete measures to ensure women’s access to positions of political power, while a series of seminars sponsored by the Council of Europe developed and promoted the concept of ‘parity democracy’ within the broader context of democratic renovation in Europe. These events conferred international legitimacy on candidate gender quotas and, in many cases, offered renewed inspiration for campaigns to bring more women into politics. Their visibility, combined with the rapid adoption of quotas in their wake, however, has led many to mistake their role as catalysts for their role as the cause or origin of specific quota policies.

Research on Latin America, in particular, highlights the central importance of the Beijing PfA in the rapid diffusion of gender quotas across the region after 1995. In reality, domestic campaigns were already under way in many Latin American countries before 1995, and the Beijing Conference provided crucial momentum for those arguing in favor of quota adoption. In Mexico, debates began as early as 1988, when the Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD) adopted a 20% quota for women in leadership positions that was then extended to candidate lists in 1993. That same year, the Chamber of Deputies – dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – amended the electoral law to encourage political parties to promote the nomination of female candidates, and the PRD increased its party quota to 30%. In 1995, women returning from the Beijing Conference began working together for a more specific quota law, and they succeeded in

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110 Baldez forthcoming.
getting the Chamber of Deputies to approve a temporary article of law in 1996 recommending that political parties nominate no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex among their candidates to parliament. This article was later strengthened through a revision to the electoral code in 2002 requiring that parties adopt a 30% quota for women. In Costa Rica, a quota law was also discussed as early as 1988 as part of the proposed Bill on Real Equality between Women and Men. When this provision was not included in the final version of the law passed in 1990, supporters lobbied for similar revisions to the electoral code in 1992 and 1995, until legislators finally adopted a 40% national quota law in 1996. Similar patterns appear in Brazil and Peru, where parties began debating gender quotas in 1986 and 1990, respectively, but legislators passed national measures only in 1997, in large part because of the publicity generated by the Beijing Conference but also stemming from a series of IPU meetings in 1997.

International blockage and domestic quota campaigns

International blockage affects domestic quota campaigns to the extent that international actors seek to prevent the adoption of gender quotas, despite mobilization by local women’s groups and transnational NGO’s in favor of these measures. This dynamic is relatively rare across quota campaigns, since international organizations in general tend to support commitments to increase women’s political representation. Two notable exceptions are East Timor and Iraq, where international officials have opposed gender quotas, albeit with two quite distinct outcomes.

In East Timor, the quota debate took place during the UN Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) between 1999 and 2001. Women were extremely active in politics during this period, and in 2000, women came together from all over East Timor to draft a Platform for

111 Stevenson 2000.
112 Baldez forthcoming.
115 Araújo 2003; Schmidt 2003a; Yáñez 2003.
116 Domestic opponents of gender quotas, however, have sometimes made reference to international law in order to justify their opposition to quotas at the national level. In the UK, for example, some lawyers suggested that efforts to change the Sex Discrimination Act to allow parties to apply gender quotas would put the UK in violation of the European Union Equal Treatment Directive. See Russell 2000.
Action for the Advancement of Timorese Women, which included a 30% target for women in decision-making. A delegation of these women then lobbied the National Council of Timorese Resistance, which passed a resolution to pressure UNTAET to adopt a 30% gender quota for all public offices. Despite the various quota provisions that UNTAET had already applied to ensure women’s election to local development councils, the National Council, the National Consultative Council, and the public administration, UN officials actively interfered in the debate surrounding quotas for elections to the Constituent Assembly. Although the National Council had already approved a quota for these elections, UN staff warned that the UN would be forced to pull out of East Timor if these quotas were applied. Despite support for quotas from the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the UN Electoral Assistance Division in New York concluded that electoral quotas for women did not constitute international ‘best’ practice for elections. UN staff in East Timor then actively lobbied National Council members, who eventually contravened their original decision to support quotas – including women who had attained their positions on the National Council through such quotas in the first place. Protests by women’s groups, however, convinced UNTAET to provide funds for training female candidates, as well as to provide extra air time on UNTAET-controlled media for parties that took steps to include women.\textsuperscript{117}

In \textit{Iraq}, the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) assumed temporary leadership following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. In October, women from all over the country presented a list of demands to Paul Bremer, the top U.S. administrator in Iraq, calling for a 30% quota for women in local and national elections, the cabinet, and the assembly in charge of drafting the new constitution. Despite support from women at the grassroots, women in the interim government, and women in the cabinet, the CPA rejected the idea of quotas in favor of more indirect ways of involving women in the political process.\textsuperscript{118} Women then initiated a petition campaign to demand that 40% of the seats in the new national assembly be set aside for women,\textsuperscript{119} and while a February 2004 draft of the constitution incorporated this demand,\textsuperscript{120} the version

\textsuperscript{117}CIIR 2001; Pires 2002; Pires 2004.

\textsuperscript{118}Ciezadlo 2003.

\textsuperscript{119}Banerjee 2004; Borst 2004.

\textsuperscript{120}Knox 2004.
approved in March 2004 reduced the quota to 25% and left open the question of how this quota
would be implemented.\textsuperscript{121} Despite CPA opposition, then, quotas were eventually adopted in Iraq,
but only after extensive mobilization by Iraqi women in favor of these measures.\textsuperscript{122}

\textbf{Conclusions}

These four causal patterns – international pressure, transnational emulation, international
catalysts, and international blockage – reveal that national quota campaigns do not simply follow
international trends, but rather interact in different ways with international and transnational actors
and ideas. Further, some of these patterns intersect, as in cases where transnational emulation
combines with international catalysts to promote quota adoption, or cases where transnational
emulation clashes with international blockage to deflect quota demands. Although current research
on gender quotas rarely considers the international and transnational dimensions of quota debates,
the rapid diffusion of gender quotas around the globe suggests that various quota campaigns are
related to one another in that they react to the same international stimulus, they share information
across national borders, they receive a boost from international developments, or they deflate
through contact with international actors. These connections shed light on the local, national,
international, and transnational aspects of all quota debates, no matter how local they appear. The
possibility of at least four different dynamics thus signals the need to move away from simple
accounts of diffusion to recognize the multiple processes shaping the spread of candidate gender
quotas worldwide.

\textsuperscript{121} Friedlin 2004; Shelby 2004.
\textsuperscript{122} Hogan 2004.
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