

# Haileybury MUN

## Research report

### General Assembly 4: Special Political and Decolonisation

#### The question of quotas in national politics

By: Arianna Mortini

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### Definitions

#### *Quota (in politics)*

An affirmative measure which establishes a fixed percentage for the nomination or representation of a specific group. They are generally used to increase the participation of this group in decision-making positions and most often take the form of a “critical minimum”, such as 20, 30 or 40 per cent. (1)

#### *Gender Quota*

Positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion (percentage) or number of places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria. (2)

#### *Legislature*

A deliberative assembly with the authority to make laws for a political entity such as a country or city.

### Introduction

Gender quotas have become an increasingly prominent solution in recent years to the underrepresentation of women in electoral politics. Quotas to promote women's representation in the world's **legislatures** have spread to more than one hundred countries. The diffusion of gender quotas poses a puzzle since they have often been adopted in countries where women have low status. International influence and inducements best explain quota adoption in developing countries. The international legitimacy of gender quotas leads them to be adopted through two causal pathways: directly, through post-conflict peace operations, and indirectly, by encouraging countries, especially those that depend on foreign aid, to signal their commitment to democracy by adopting quotas. (3)

There are several types of quota systems distinguished on the basis of various criteria:

Statutory candidate quotas are included in the constitution (e.g. in Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda) or in electoral law (in many parts of Latin America, and in Belgium,

France, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina), and they relate to the gender composition of the electoral lists of all political parties.

Voluntary party quotas are adopted by political parties and take the form of internal party requirements to nominate at least a minimum number or percentage of women.

In general, statutory quotas are considered more effective than voluntary party quotas. However, some countries including Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, have achieved high levels of women in parliament without the use of statutory quotas. If the stage of the selection process at which the quota is applied is the criterion of division, there are three types of quotas depending on whether they aim to change the gender composition of the pool of aspirants, candidates or those elected.

The first kind of quota have been used in countries with plurality (single winner) electoral systems (e.g. "all-women shortlists" – a controversial model introduced by the British Labour Party)

In the second case a typical quota rule is that a certain minimum percentage of female candidates must be placed on lists of candidates for public election by political parties. This type of quota is primarily used in countries with proportional electoral systems.

In the third case, quotas take the form of seats reserved for one gender. Reserved seats can be found mainly in Asia, the Middle East, and in post-conflict African countries (e.g. Rwanda and Uganda). (1)

## **Key issues**

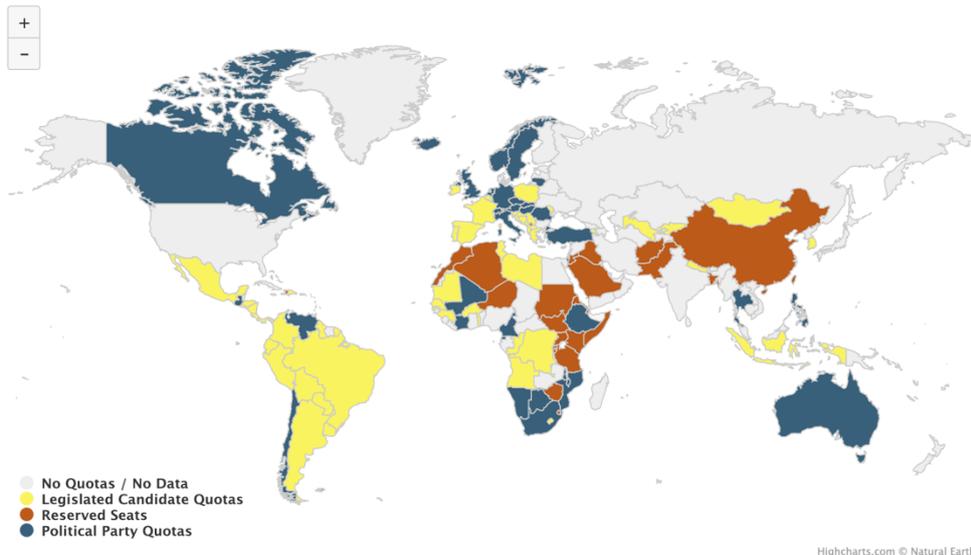
### *Importance of Quotas*

Promoting gender equality, including through gender quotas, has become a key part of international democracy promotion. Since 1991, when Argentina implemented a legislated candidate gender quota (Ley de Cupos) as the first state worldwide, gender quotas have increasingly come to be seen as an excellent remedy to eliminate the disease of patriarchy in politics and achieve representational equality between the sexes. In this regard, the discourse on gender quotas is part of a wider discourse of representation and the question how the concerns of oppressed groups in society can be represented in national policy-making. (4)

### *Current position of women in politics*

Despite the fact that the number of countries having some set of gender quotas is steadily rising, in 2011 on average women still accounted for only 19.5% of members of national parliaments worldwide. As of October 25, 2013, the global average of women in national assemblies is 21.5%).

## Gender quotas around the world (5)



### Timeline of events

4th July 2013 - *European Parliament adopted the report 'Improving the practical arrangements for the holding of the European elections in 2014'* - calls upon MS and political parties to support female candidates (does not require quotas or other mandatory means to secure this) (6)

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