



Jumping on the Bandwagon: Origins and Effects of Gender Quotas Worldwide

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Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide. By Mona Lena Krook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 290 pp., \$22.45 paperback (ISBN-13: 978-0-195-37567-1).

Since the 1990s, political transformations in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa have contributed to progressive institutional reforms. Among those institutional changes, the adoption of gender quotas has been a worldwide phenomenon. In the 1990s, quotas “appeared in more than 50 countries” and have been introduced “by 40 more since 2000,” whereas they were rarely adopted during most of the twentieth century (Krook 2009:4). Gender quotas are institutional mechanisms that provide women with a means to secure legislative seats; they have been implemented in developed and developing countries and shaped by regional and international trends (Crocker 2007). Undoubtedly, research on gender quotas has become one of the fastest growing scholarships within the subfield of women and politics and deserves the attention of scholars and students of international relations and policymakers.

However, most studies on gender quotas have focused on country-cases (Araujo 2003; Baldez 2004; Schmidt and Saunders 2004) or on several countries in a region (Htun and Jones 2002; Matland and Montgomery 2003; Araujo and Garcia Quesada 2006); others have dealt with the process of cross-national or subnational diffusion (Crocker 2007), but Krook’s research goes beyond previous works. In her book, Krook takes on the various types of gender quotas, studies their origins and effects, and employs a pathbreaking framework of analysis to explain these trends. She develops an approach that outlines the range of actors, motivations, and contexts involved in quota reforms across the globe. Through a review of the existing quota literature, she identifies the factors that appear across many studies while acknowledging that there is no single model of quota adoption (p. 17) and that there are limits to prediction and prescription when it comes to the implementation of quotas (p. 224).

Krook analyzes three categories of gender quotas that have been adopted worldwide: reserved seats, party-level systems, and legislative quotas. Reserved seats were first introduced in the 1930s, re-introduced in the 1970s, and again after 2000 (Krook 2009:6). These types of quotas set aside a certain number of seats in parliament for women, that is, instead of being elected by regular procedures, women are either appointed or nominated by the president, the elected parliament, or may be selected in another manner (Krook 2004; Piatti-Crocker and Kempton 2008). Reserved seats have become prevalent in many parts of the world, particularly in a number of African and Middle Eastern countries, such as Rwanda, Uganda, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Quota Project 2010). Party-based quota systems appeared first in the 1970s. In this type of system, it is up to a given political party to adopt a gender quota; thus, the percentage of women required by the quota and how these quotas are designed and implemented are left to the decision of a given political party. Party-based quota systems are preva-

lent in Western Europe, although other countries such as Chile, Philippines, and South Africa, among many others, have also implemented this type of quotas (Dahlerup 2006; Krook 2006). Finally, legislative quotas appeared in the 1990s. These quotas mandate all parties presenting candidates for legislative elections to include a certain percentage of women in their candidate party lists. The first country to adopt such quotas was Argentina and has been primarily a Latin American phenomenon. In less than a decade, twelve other Latin American countries adopted legislative quotas, although in two of them (Venezuela and Colombia), the legislation was later revoked (Piatti-Crocker 2010). Beyond Latin America, other countries, including Belgium, France, and Indonesia, have adopted similar quotas (Quota Project 2010). In her book, Krook (2006) claims that “given the structure of diffusion, it is difficult to explain these patterns as the result of parallel processes which have independently produced the same policy outcomes across many countries within the same span of time.”

Apart from the types of quotas, the author discusses other common factors leading to the adoption of quotas worldwide. Krook (2009:28) asserts that national legislatures tend to adopt quotas in times “of crisis or change,” such as in transitional democracies, post-conflict societies, or countries undergoing constitutional reforms. On the other hand, parties adopt quotas to counteract or increase a party’s popularity, to sustain an existing regime, or in response to the introduction of quotas by a rival party. In addition, Krook (2006) claims that the institutional process leading to the adoption of gender quotas is connected in many ways by quota campaigns around the world (p. 29) and women’s regional and international conferences (p. 19). Key actors in quota debates vary across countries and may have a feminist or a nonfeminist agenda. Traditional and less traditional international and transnational actors play a significant role in campaigning for reforms, and both national and international/transnational actors justify quota adoption on normative terms of justice but also on strategic motivations or populist purposes (pp. 29–32). Thus, “quota policies may result from multiple groups of actors who support reform for various and perhaps conflicting reasons” (p. 20).

An important aspect following the adoption of institutional mechanisms is their implementation. Krook’s chapter three discusses the rates of success of gender quotas and how they “fit” with their existing institutional framework (p. 38). Scholarship has focused on the effectiveness of quotas based on their types (Jones 1996; Norris 2004). More recent works have also discussed specific institutional mechanisms, including types of electoral systems (Matland and Studlar 1996; Schmidt and Saunders 2004), district and party magnitudes (Norris 2004; Jones, 2004), or the incorporation of placement mandates (Jones 1996; Krook 2006) to explain their effectiveness. Going beyond this scholarship, Krook asserts that whereas “details of individual provisions shape implementation... measures that appear similar sometimes have distinct effects on women’s representation- and at the same time provisions that seem dissimilar have comparable results”(p. 39). Krook approaches these puzzles by focusing on three categories of gendered institutions: systemic, practical, and normative ones. The author claims that the three types of quotas reform different kinds of institutions: reserved seats tend to redesign systemic institutions, party quotas seem to redefine practical institutions, and legislative quotas mainly rework normative institutions (pp. 42–54). Still, Krook notes that specific quota campaigns interact with “numerous existing institutional measures” and emphasizes the importance of how those campaigns intersect with the reform or nonreform of other institutions (pp. 54–55). The author notes that when quota campaigns mutually reinforce other institutions, thus harmonizing sequences, quotas are expected to experience a dramatic success, such that they “fit together over time” as they “complement institutional reform with institutional configurational change.”

On the other hand, under disjointed sequences, “quota campaigns clash with institutions, they produce conflicts and tensions that undermine efforts to promote change” (p. 210).

In applying her theoretical framework and implementing a careful qualitative research, Krook selects six country-cases, compares a pair of countries for each type of quotas, and claims that it is not the type of quota that makes it more or less effective but whether sequences are harmonizing or disjointed. Indeed, in countries experiencing harmonizing sequences, such as in the case of Pakistan’s reserved seats, Sweden’s party-level system, and Argentina’s legislative quotas, the proportion of women in the legislatures increased dramatically. On the other hand, those countries with disjointed sequences—India, United Kingdom, and France, respectively—have seen little change or even stagnation in the proportion of women elected (pp. 55–56). In her conclusion, the author also notes that in some instances, “disjointed sequences may become harmonizing, if quota campaigners come to realize the importance of broader institutional configurations,” and in others, they “may coexist” (p. 210).

Quotas for Women in Politics is a must read for scholars and students of women and politics. Yet, it is so clearly written and comprehensive that even researchers and students new to the subfield will find her book fascinating. Her framework of analysis serves as a guiding scheme for further comparative research of quota adoption and its effective implementation. Her innovative approach provides both a thorough analysis of specific cases and aims at “synthesizing and elaborating on the growing literature of gender quota provisions” (p. 218). Considering that the existing quota literature is extremely diverse and offers contradictory explanations, it is of vital importance to consider Krook’s framework of analysis for future research and to help build bridges across the discipline.

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