

# Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide

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In recent years, more than a hundred countries have adopted quotas for the selection of female candidates to political office. Examining individual cases of quota reform, scholars offer four basic causal stories to explain quota adoption: Women mobilize for quotas to increase women's representation, political elites recognize strategic advantages for supporting quotas, quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation, and quotas are supported by international norms and spread through transnational sharing. Although most research focuses on the first three accounts, I argue that the fourth offers the greatest potential for understanding the rapid diffusion of gender quota policies, as it explicitly addresses the potential connections among quota campaigns. In a theory-building exercise, I combine empirical work on gender quotas with insights from the international norms literature to identify four distinct international and transnational influences on national quota debates: international imposition, transnational emulation, international tipping, and international blockage. These patterns reveal that domestic debates often have international and transnational dimensions, at the same time that they intersect in distinct ways with international and transnational trends. As work on gender quotas continues to grow, therefore, I call on scholars to move away from simple accounts of diffusion to a recognition of the multiple processes shaping the spread of candidate gender quotas worldwide.

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In recent years, political parties and national legislatures in more than one hundred countries have adopted quotas for the selection of female candidates to political office.<sup>1</sup> These provisions include reserved seats, which set aside a certain number of places for women; party quotas, which aim to increase the proportion of women among party candidates; and legislative quotas, which require all parties to nominate a certain percentage of women on their electoral slates. The overwhelming majority of these proposals have emerged only over the course of the last decade (Krook 2005, 493–503), suggesting that gender quotas are a global phenomenon (Krook 2004), powered by some degree of policy diffusion across national debates. The existing literature, however, offers mainly domestic explanations for quota adoption related to the mobilization of women's groups, the calculations of political elites, and the connections between quotas and reigning political norms. While these conclusions likely stem from a focus on single cases of quota reform, scholars often mention in passing the role of international and transnational actors in inspiring and even formulating demands for quotas in particular national contexts. These remarks, I argue, point to an overlooked source of quota policies that 1) supplements domestic explanations to provide more accurate accounts of quota adoption, and 2) specifies mechanisms linking individual campaigns to explain the rapid spread of gender quotas worldwide.

Research on gender quotas has quickly become one of the fastest growing subfields in the study of women and politics. To date, most of this work seeks to catch up with empirical developments by documenting the events leading to quota adoption in individual countries. In this article, I integrate these narratives with original research to devise a more comprehensive model that accounts for both similarities and differences in quota campaigns. In the first section, I outline my research design—as well as its scope and limits—in order to spell out my inductive approach to theory building, as well as to clarify what this article contributes to the literature on gender quotas. In the second section, I review existing research that I organize into four “stories” about the origins of quota policies, three centered on domestic actors and one alluding to possible international and transnational influences on quota reform. As each account is both supported and undermined by a wide range of evidence, I propose that each captures a dynamic at work in some but not all quota

1. For details on these policies, see *Global Database of Quotas for Women* (2006) and Krook (2005).

campaigns. At the same time, I suggest that international and transnational actors may serve as a possible connection among these various quota debates.

I combine these insights in the third section, where I explore the international and transnational factors that inform and influence actors in national quota campaigns in order to locate individual cases within the wider universe of quota debates. Drawing on a range of sources, I describe four scenarios leading to quota reform: instances where international actors impose quotas on political elites, sometimes, but not always, in cooperation with women's movements and transnational non-governmental organizations; cases where demonstration effects and information sharing among women's groups and NGOs across national borders inspire women's movements to launch quota campaigns to pressure political elites; situations where international actors and events serve as catalysts to domestic debates already in progress, tipping the balance in favor of quota advocates among women's movements and political elites; and countries where international actors intervene to block the adoption of quotas, despite the efforts of women's groups, political elites, and transnational NGOs. These patterns reveal that domestic debates often have international and transnational dimensions, at the same time that they intersect in distinct ways with international and transnational trends. In the final section, I note that these four scenarios—while rooted in studies of single quota campaigns—emerge only through explicit comparisons and attempts to trace the wider origins of quota reforms. As work on gender quotas continues to expand, therefore, I call on scholars to broaden the scope of their research to analyze the shared and multiple processes shaping the spread of gender quotas worldwide.

## RESEARCH DESIGN: SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This article forms part of a larger project on the adoption and implementation of gender quotas worldwide (Krook 2005), for which I undertook a comprehensive review of nearly all scholarly work on gender quotas, both published and unpublished.<sup>2</sup> Approaching each case study as a potential “building block” for a broader theory of quota adoption (George

2. I say “nearly” all work simply because new studies on national quota campaigns are constantly appearing in print and online. For the newest unpublished work on gender quotas, see <http://www.quotaproject.org/papers.htm>.

and Bennett 2005, 73–76), I recorded the actors and motivations for quota reform presented by each author, which I then compared with other accounts of the campaign, campaigns within the same world region, and campaigns around the world. Similar to others engaged in theory building (cf. Keck and Sikkink 1998; Mazur 2002), I discovered both shared and conflicting perspectives on the dynamics of quota adoption both within and across countries. As most quota scholars tend to view cases in isolation from one another, I addressed these patterns by revisiting each case narrative for clues regarding its connections to other cases by noting any references 1) to quotas in other countries or 2) to the involvement or importance of actors beyond national borders. I found that such influences were often mentioned but not elaborated upon, with some even being relegated to footnotes. To fill out these accounts, I then searched the internet for more information on the activities of international organizations and transnational NGOs, which I supplemented with journalistic reports—found online and in various news databases—for additional details regarding the ideas, meetings, and negotiations that shaped specific quota policies.

As this research was highly inductive, I must emphasize that the categorizations—and the illustrations that follow—are neither systematic nor complete, but merely indicative of diversity and connections among quota campaigns around the world. Most crucially, my focus on positive cases says little about instances where quotas were rejected or never even reached the political agenda. As a consequence, I cannot state with confidence—on the basis of current evidence—whether international or domestic factors are ultimately more decisive. My initial review, however, reveals multiple paths to quota reform, shaped by combinations of factors within and beyond national borders. Determining the relative weight of certain variables may thus be less important to advancing the quota literature than identifying elements that remain undertheorized but potentially vital for understanding the trajectories of particular campaigns. Indeed, an explicit dialogue among cases points to numerous venues for future studies by calling attention to actors and motivations that scholars may overlook in their work on a single country (Krook forthcoming). Although this article is limited in terms of its ability to test theories, therefore, it serves a crucial theory-building purpose by detecting similarities and differences across quota campaigns. As such, it takes some first steps toward fostering a more cumulative research agenda as these measures spread and gain importance in a growing number of national contexts.

## 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 narratives as to who supports quota policies and why quotas are adopted: Women mobilize for the adoption of quotas to increase women's representation, political elites recognize strategic advantages for supporting quotas, quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation, and quotas are supported by international norms and spread through transnational sharing. After outlining these accounts, I reconcile them by observing that the four stories capture elements that do not necessarily operate in all campaigns at all times. To determine the relevant actors and incentives in particular quota debates—and thus situate each campaign within the broader global trajectory of quota reform—I argue for a closer examination of the international and transnational dimensions of domestic debates that are, to date, the most undertheorized of all four accounts.

### **Women Mobilize for the Adoption of Gender Quotas to Increase Women's Representation**

Most research on quota adoption views women as the source of quota proposals. It argues that efforts to nominate more women never occur without the prior mobilization of women, even when male elites are ultimately responsible for the decision to establish quotas, and usually emerge when women perceive quotas as an effective—and perhaps the only—means for increasing female political representation. The specific groups who may articulate quota demands include grassroots women's movements that work both nationally and internationally to promote women's political participation (Baldez 2004; Beckwith 2003; Lubertino Beltrán 1992; Pires 2002); cross-partisan networks among women who make connections with one another through national and international women's gatherings, or through transnational women's networks, to exchange information on successful strategies for increasing women's representation (Bruhn 2003; Chama 2001; Hassim 2002; Howard-Merriam 1990); 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 (Connell 1998;

Skjeie 1992); individual women inside political parties who lobby male leaders to promote female candidates (Araújo 2003; Kittilson 2006; Schmidt 2003); 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 (Costa Benavides 2003; García Quesada 2003; Jones 1996).

### **Political Elites Recognize Strategic Advantages for Supporting Gender Quotas**

Other scholars focus on political elites and the strategic advantages they perceive for adopting gender quotas, generally by detailing the role of male elites in blocking or opening up opportunities for women to run for political office. Most point to the role of party competition, noting that elites often embrace quota reform after one of their electoral rivals establishes them (Caul 2001; Davidson-Schmich 2006; Matland and Studlar 1996; Meier 2004). These effects are often heightened when parties seek to overcome a long period in opposition or a dramatic decrease in popularity by closing a gap in support among female voters (Kolinsky 1991; Perrigo 1996; Stevenson 2000). Other strategic motivations include promoting female candidates to win an electoral campaign or sustain an existing regime (Howard-Merriam 1990; Millard and Ortiz 1998; Schmidt 2003); engaging in empty gestures to express commitment to women's rights without necessarily altering existing patterns of representation (Araújo 2003; Htun and Jones 2002; Mossuz-Lavau 1998; Rai 1999); applying quotas to consolidate control over party representatives and political rivals (Chowdhury 2002; Goetz and Hassim 2003); and supporting quotas to demonstrate autonomy from other branches of government (Baldez 2004).

### **Quotas Are Consistent with Existing or Emerging Notions of Equality and Representation**

Still other work perceives quota adoption as an extension of existing or emerging notions of equality and representation. Researchers interpret this consistency, however, in various ways depending on how they relate quota provisions to reigning norms. Some equate quota adoption with ideas about equality and fair access by noting that quotas in left-wing parties match their more general goals of social equality and grassroots

decision making (Hassim 2002; Kolinsky 1991; Opello 2002). Others view quotas for women in terms of other representational guarantees meant to recognize difference and the need for proportional representation (In-between 1999; Meier 2000; Sgier 2003). Yet a third group associates quota adoption with democratic innovation by observing that demands for quotas emerge during periods of democratic transition or the creation of new democratic institutions as a means for guaranteeing the representation of traditionally underprivileged groups or establishing the national and international legitimacy of the new regime (Brown et al. 2002; Camacho Granados et al. 1997; Reyes 2002).

### **Quotas Are Supported by International Norms and Are Spread through Transnational Sharing**

A final vein of research—which often coexists with the first three accounts—mentions the role of international norms and transnational information sharing in shaping national quota debates. These scholars generally locate the origins of these policies in international meetings and conferences that generate recommendations for member states to improve women's access to political decision making. The two 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, which were both elaborated upon within the framework of the United Nations. Other international organizations, however, have issued similar recommendations in recent years that embrace quotas for women, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Socialist International, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Commonwealth, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, and the Organization of American States. At the same time, 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 (Htun and Jones 2002; Leijenaar 1997). These actors include NGOs, groups formed under the auspices of international institutions, and formal and informal networks among scholars, activists, and politicians, who share information across national borders that enables domestic campaigns to learn new tactics for reform and import strategies from other countries into their own (Krook 2003).

## Reconciling Conflicting Accounts of Quota Adoption

Research on gender quotas is relatively new, but it has already generated four distinct accounts concerning the actors and motivations behind quota adoption. While supported by evidence from a range of different cases, however, each story confronts counterevidence in the other three narratives. Indeed, when viewed together, the four accounts apparently contradict one another, privileging grassroots movements *or* elite actors, and local and national projects *or* international and transnational trends.

These patterns suggest two possibilities. First, because each insight emerges from a limited range of cases, these stories may reflect dynamics that operate in some cases but not in others. Second, because these accounts complement one another in numerous ways, they may in fact form part of a larger sequence of events within and across countries. For example, 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. Combined, these possibilities indicate that individual campaigns may follow distinct paths to quota reform (Bruhn 2003; Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005), with various actors and motivations being activated at points in different campaign trajectories that cross regions and unfold over extended periods of time. According to this perspective, all policies form part of a larger global sequence of quota reforms, calling attention to the international and transnational dimensions of all quota campaigns, no matter how local they appear. To draw connections between apparently disparate debates, therefore, I turn to the last account for clues to explain the course of national quota campaigns, as well as the rapid diffusion of gender quotas worldwide.

### THE DIFFUSION OF CANDIDATE GENDER QUOTAS: INTERNATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Although most research on gender quotas focuses on single countries, two characteristics of quota adoption point to a certain degree of cross-national diffusion. First, the type of quota policy pursued is strongly correlated with world region: Reserved seats appear mainly in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East; party quotas are most common in Western Europe; and legislative quotas are found primarily in Latin America (Krook 2004).



Second, the timing of quota proposals is clearly clustered around certain years: After several decades of stagnation, the number of countries with quotas increased slightly over the course of the 1980s and then jumped dramatically during the 1990s and 2000s (see Table 1).

The international relations literature offers three basic explanations for cross-national policy diffusion: International actors are “teachers” and enforcers of international norms (Finnemore 1993); transnational actors are cross-national policy entrepreneurs and advocates (Keck and Sikkink 1998; True and Mintrom 2001); and local actors are active “translators” of international norms to specific domestic contexts (Acharya 2004). Combining these perspectives with a survey of quota campaigns worldwide, I propose that international and transnational dynamics intervene in 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.<sup>3</sup> These patterns nuance accounts of quota adoption in research on gender quotas, but perhaps more strikingly, challenge debates on international norms that argue that one particular set of actors—international organizations, transnational networks, or states and local activists—is the most important in all instances of norm diffusion. I elaborate on each of these scenarios, drawing on a range of country examples. Although I address each account as analytically separate, I recognize that these dynamics may sometimes intersect, as in cases where transnational emulation and international tipping combine to facilitate quota adoption or, alternatively, international blockage frustrates transnational emulation to remove quotas from the political agenda.

### International Imposition and Domestic Quota Campaigns

International imposition occurs when international actors are directly involved in quota adoption, either by making the decision to apply quotas or by compelling national leaders to do so themselves. The international community generally exerts this pressure in cooperation with local women’s movements and transnational NGOs, but sometimes acts

3. The fourth dynamic might be considered a subset of the first, as it involves the same types of actors, but I place it as a separate category because they take a completely opposite approach by seeking to block—not promote—the adoption of quotas. I am grateful to Bill McAllister for pointing out this possibility.

Table 1. Gender quota policies by date of adoption, region, and quota type

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Reserved Seats</i>	<i>Party Quotas</i>	<i>Legislative Quotas</i>
1930s	Asia	India		
1940s	Asia	Taiwan		
1950s	Asia	Pakistan	China	
1960s	Africa	Ghana		
1970s	Asia Middle East Western Europe	Bangladesh Egypt*	Israel Netherlands Norway	
1980s	Africa	Uganda Latin America  North America Western Europe	Brazil Chile Uruguay Canada Austria Belgium Denmark* Germany Iceland Sweden United Kingdom	
1990s	Africa	Kenya Sudan Tanzania	Cape Verde Mozambique Namibia** Senegal South Africa	Namibia**
	Asia	Nepal Philippines**	India*** North Korea Philippines** South Korea*** Taiwan***	
	Eastern Europe		Armenia** Czech Republic Estonia Hungary Kyrgyzstan Lithuania Poland Slovakia Slovenia	Armenia**
	Latin America		Dominican Republic** El Salvador Haiti Mexico*** Nicaragua Venezuela**	Argentina Bolivia Brazil Colombia* Costa Rica Dominican Republic** Ecuador Guyana Panama Peru Venezuela*,**

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Reserved Seats</i>	<i>Party Quotas</i>	<i>Legislative Quotas</i>	
1990s ( <i>continued</i> )	Middle East		Turkey		
	Pacific		Australia		
			Fiji		
	Western Europe		Cyprus	Belgium	
			France**	France**	
			Greece	Italy*, **	
			Ireland		
			Italy**		
			Luxembourg		
			Portugal		
2000s	Africa	Burkina Faso	Angola	Liberia	
		Burundi	Botswana	Niger	
		Djibouti	Cameroon	Rwanda**	
		Eritrea	Equatorial Guinea		
		Rwanda**	Ethiopia		
			Ivory Coast		
			Kenya		
			Malawi		
			Mali		
			Sierra Leone		
	Asia		Zimbabwe	Indonesia	
			Thailand	South Korea***	
		Eastern Europe		Bosnia-Herzegovina**	Bosnia-Herzegovina**
				Croatia	Macedonia**
			Macedonia**	Romania	
			Moldova	Serbia and Montenegro	
	Latin America			Uzbekistan	
				Honduras	
	Middle East	Jordan	Algeria	Mexico***	
		Morocco**	Morocco**	Afghanistan	
Western Europe		Tunisia	Iraq		
		Malta			

\*Measure later repealed.

\*\*Two quota measures adopted in the same decade.

\*\*\*Two quota measures adopted in different decades.

Source: Krook 2005, 493–503, updated.

in a more unilateral fashion and imposes quotas despite women's opposition or lack of mobilization. In these and similar cases of norm diffusion, international organizations promote policy innovations by providing a template to follow and framing the new policy as a central feature of a modern state (Finnemore 1993; Towns 2004). States comply for a variety of different reasons, but often because they seek to cultivate international legitimacy, either to foster perceptions of domestic legitimacy

or to avoid being viewed as pariahs in the international community (Klotz 1995; Sikkink 1993). As such, their behavior may reflect a degree of socialization to international norms (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Harrison 2004; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999)—in this case, gender-balanced decision making—or may simply indicate strategic action on the part of both international and local actors to achieve other political ends (Hunt 2002). Among quota campaigns, this dynamic is present mainly in postconflict societies, where international bodies not only have assumed a central role in postconflict reconstruction but have also become more heavily involved in electoral processes over the last 25 years. Although quotas have been adopted in postconflict societies without the intervention of international actors (Goetz and Hassim 2003; Tripp 2000), international efforts to institute quotas in these countries have grown significantly since the passage of UN Resolution 1325 in October 2000 calling on member states to ensure women's participation in postconflict regimes.

In Kosovo and Afghanistan, different combinations of international actors pressed for the inclusion of women in the emerging postconflict 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 unusual step, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) assumed a central role in the UN-led mission in the areas of democracy building and human rights. Upon 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 15 candidates on party lists for all local and national elections (Corrin 2002). They did not hold any public meetings with local or transnational actors before passing the regulation, but chose instead to replicate the provision adopted several months earlier in Bosnia, 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 (Lokar 2003; Nordlund 2003). The new rule provoked both international and local resistance: Some UN officials expressed concern that Kosovar society was not ready for such a measure, while local political elites argued that they would never be able to find enough competent women to meet the quota (Lyth 2001). 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 (Pires 2002). Although all the political parties managed to find enough women to put on their candidate lists (Lyth 2001), nonetheless some female candidates chose to resign their posts after the local elections in 2000, voicing their opinion that the quota system was an instrument imposed by the international community and one that did not actually guarantee equality between women and men (Nordlund 2003).

In Afghanistan, the most recent end to conflict in 2001 generated similar pressures for the inclusion of women. The UN 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 in December 2001 to lay the groundwork 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 (Bauer 2002; Dahlerup and Nordlund 2004). As a consequence, the new Afghan constitution approved in January 2004 required 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 called 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. Despite apparent international consensus on the importance of women's representation, Afghan women themselves were divided as to the desirability of quotas: Many women inside Afghanistan viewed quotas as unrealizable and even dangerous, while many women in the Afghan exile community demanded quotas as a measure to ensure women's participation in the new regime (Bauer 2002).

### **Transnational Emulation and Domestic Quota Campaigns**

Transnational emulation inspires quota campaigns when local women's movements and transnational NGOs share information on quota strategies across national borders. In most instances, they seek to overcome unfavorable domestic conditions by borrowing ideas from other groups

through direct relational ties, like personal contacts, and nonrelational channels, like journalistic accounts and academic writings (McAdam and Rucht 1993). Some engage in horizontal emulation by simply copying the strategies of others to devise the best course of action (Axelrod 1986; Florini 1996), but most have contact with transnational networks that serve as conduits of information on various policy models and tactics for change (True and Mintrom 2001) and act as allies in convincing governments to adopt new policy innovations (Keck and Sikkink 1998). While some of these instances of sharing are truly global, many occur at the regional level among countries that share historical ties (Tripp 2004) and often involve efforts to “translate” lessons to suit specific domestic contexts, even when this entails distorting lessons from other countries (Strang and Meyer 1993) or devising new “home-grown” solutions to similar policy challenges (Joachim 2003). This dynamic appears in different ways across quota campaigns but generally takes one of three forms: personal contacts among individuals regarding specific quota strategies, transmissions among countries with similar languages or parties with similar ideologies, and lessons learned through the creation of myths and innovative local solutions. This diversity stems from the fact that transnational sharing introduces a more active role for domestic campaigners, who draw insights from multiple sources but then select, borrow, and modify these strategies in order to make them “fit” their particular context.

The most direct—and most fortuitous—route to the proposal of new quota policies is through individual connections and experiences. For instance, Anwar Sadat introduced reserved seats for women in Egypt in 1979 following a trip by his wife Jihan to Sudan, where a quota had already been in effect for several years (Howard-Merriam 1990). Slightly less direct but more systematic communications occur across countries with similar languages or across political parties with comparable ideologies. The diffusion of quotas across Latin America, for example, stemmed largely from the use of Spanish in many countries across the region. Women in Argentina learned about gender quotas through extensive contacts in the late 1980s with women inside the Spanish Socialist Party and with women in Costa Rica who were mobilizing for the Bill on Real Equality between Women and Men and eventually lobbied legislators to pass a national quota law in 1991 (Lubertino Beltrán 1992). After the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Argentina then became an important model within the region as the subject of a series of meetings among Latin American female politicians in 1995 (Htun and Jones 2002),

which later culminated in the adoption of quota laws in 14 Latin American countries in 1996, 1997, and 2000.<sup>4</sup> The spread of quotas across Western Europe, in contrast, emerged in part from connections among socialist and social democratic parties within the region. Although very few case studies explicitly address transnational effects,<sup>5</sup> many 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 (Wisler 1999), or the example of socialist parties around Europe in the decision by the British Labour Party to adopt all-women shortlists (Russell 2005). European socialists, in turn, helped effect a change within the Socialist International, which now promotes the use of quotas by its affiliates in countries around the world (Valiente 2005).

The least even and predictable instances of transnational sharing, finally, do not involve straight application of lessons learned, but rather entail varying degrees of mediation by transnational and local actors. These dynamics of translation generally take one of two paths: mythmaking, whereby campaigners reduce complex analyses into concise recommendations for action in order to devise their own quota strategies, and transformation, whereby they draw on international examples as inspiration for novel home-grown solutions for adopting and applying gender quotas.

Mythmaking condenses a series of multifaceted and even contingent events into a specific quota strategy, in this way contributing to the propagation of certain myths regarding the origin and impact of quota policies. The two most powerful myths concern the Nordic countries, where increases in women's representation are inaccurately attributed to gender quotas (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005),<sup>6</sup> and the former Soviet-bloc countries, where high levels of female participation in the Communist regime are wrongly attributed to the presence of quota provisions (Matland and Montgomery 2003).

4. For a brief overview of these policies, see <http://www.oas.org/CIM/English/Laws-Cuota.htm> (August 15, 2004).

5. 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' (Krook 2005; Lovecy 2002).

6. Contrary to popular belief, quotas were adopted in many of the Nordic countries as a means to consolidate women's gains once they had already attained higher levels of representation (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). A partial exception to this trend is Norway, where quotas proved crucial in electing more women to political office, although they too were adopted after women had engaged in various voter "actions" that had brought large numbers of women into local government (Inheteven 1999; Skjeie 1992).

While these myths tend towards uniform solutions—adopting or not adopting gender quotas—processes of transformation 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 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2006). 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, 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 second innovation was a parallel system of women's councils and women-only elections to guarantee a venue for representing women's concerns (Powley 2003). While the idea for gender quotas originated abroad, therefore, policies for promoting women's representation in Rwanda constituted a unique approach for incorporating women into the new regime.

### **International Tipping and Domestic Quota Campaigns**

International tipping influences quota campaigns already in progress by providing new sources of normative leverage in national debates. While international documents and meetings serve as catalysts by introducing or popularizing new ideas and strategies for increasing women's representation, most of the "work" in these campaigns is done by domestic actors who organize both nationally and regionally, often but not always in the run-up to international women's conferences (Alvarez 2000; Tripp 2004). In these and similar instances of norm diffusion, domestic policy entrepreneurs are aided by international events that intensify focus on their particular issue area, leading advocates to point increasingly to international rules to justify their support for a new policy innovation (Cortell and Davis 1996). Within quota campaigns, this dynamic is set in motion by international agreements like CEDAW and the Beijing PFA, which called on governments around the world to foster women's full and equal participation in public life and proposed various concrete mea-



tures to ensure women's access to positions of political power (United Nations 1979; United Nations 1995), as well as international seminars like those sponsored by the Council of Europe, which developed and promoted the concept of "parity democracy" within the broader context of democratic renovation in Europe (Lovecy 2002). These events confer international legitimacy on candidate gender quotas and, in many cases, offer renewed inspiration for campaigns to bring more women into politics (Camacho Granados et al. 1997; Mossuz-Lavau 1998). Their visibility, combined with the rapid adoption of quotas in their wake, however, leads many to mistake their role as catalysts for their role as the cause or origin of specific quota policies.

The tendency to overlook the dynamics of international tipping—and thus attribute the spread of gender quotas to international imposition and transnational emulation—is particularly prevalent in research on Latin America, where scholars focus on the role of the Beijing PfA in spurring the rapid diffusion of gender quotas across the region after 1995 (Camacho Granados et al. 1997; Htun and Jones 2002). In reality, domestic campaigns were already under way in many Latin American countries before 1995, although the Beijing Conference provided crucial momentum for quota advocates, who could point to international agreements to convince activists and legislators to press for quota adoption.

In Mexico, for example, quota 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 (Bruhn 2003). That same year, the PRD increased its party quota to 30%, and 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. Dissatisfied with this provision, women returning from the Beijing Conference in 1995 began working together for a more specific quota law and eventually succeeded in gaining a temporary article in 1996 recommending that all parties nominate no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex among their candidates to parliament (Stevenson 2000). This article was later strengthened through a revision to the electoral code in 2002 requiring that parties adopt a 30% quota for women (Baldez 2004). 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 (Saint-Germain and Morgan 1991). 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 (García Quesada 2003). 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 Inter-Parliamentary Union meetings in 1997 (Araújo 2003; Schmidt 2003; Yáñez 2003).

### **International Blockage and Domestic Quota Campaigns**

International blockage, finally, affects domestic quota campaigns when international actors seek to prevent the adoption of gender quotas, despite mobilization by local women's groups and transnational NGOs in favor of quota policies. These attempts to subvert or undermine quota adoption, however, may be overcome when domestic pressures exceed the degree of international intervention into national political processes. This possibility is much less developed within the literature on international norms, but it shares certain parallels with research on competing sets of national and international norms, which explains why norms are implemented in some instances but not in others (Checkel 2001), and why some norms are enforced and others are not (Legro 1997). In these cases, international organizations are captured, either unwittingly or as part of their strategic framing processes, by implicit beliefs that prevent change in traditional gender norms (Carpenter 2003). This dynamic is relatively rare across quota campaigns, since international actors in general tend to support commitments to increase women's political representation. Recognizing their potential to block quota adoption, however, is crucial for tempering universalizing claims about the positive impact of international organizations on domestic quota campaigns.

This point is well illustrated by a comparison of East Timor and Iraq, where efforts on the part of international actors to block quotas led to two distinct outcomes. In East Timor, debates over quota adoption took place during the UN Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) between 1999 and 2001. Women's groups were extremely active in politics during this period, and in 2000, they came together from all over East Timor to draft a Platform for 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 fact that UNTAET had already applied quota provisions to ensure women's election to local development councils, the National Council, the National Consultative Council, and the public administration, UN officials quickly changed their position during the debates on quotas for the Constituent Assembly. Although the National Council had already approved a quota for these elections, the UN Electoral Assistance Division in New York maintained that electoral quotas for women did not constitute international "best" practice for elections and threatened to pull out of East Timor if these quotas were applied, even when faced with interventions by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women in favor of quotas. To this end, they 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 (CIIR 2001; Pires 2002).

In Iraq, similar demands for quotas emerged after the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) assumed temporary leadership following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. In October of that year, 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 grass roots, 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.<sup>7</sup> Women then initiated a petition campaign to demand that 40% of the seats in the new national assembly be set aside for women,<sup>8</sup> and while a February 2004 draft of the constitution incorporated this demand (Knox 2004), the version approved in March 2004 reduced the quota to 25% and left open the question of how this quota would be implemented (Dahlerup and Nordlund 2004). In the run-up to elections in January 2005, however, election authorities strengthened these requirements by mandating that every third

7. Annia Ciezadlo, "Iraqi Women Raise Voices—for Quotas," *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 December 2003.

8. Neela Banerjee, "Iraqi Women's Window of Opportunity for Political Gains is Closing," *New York Times*, 26 February 2004; Barbara Borst, "U.S. Does Not Deliver on Women's Rights in Iraq, Afghanistan, Say Women's Groups," *Manila Times*, 6 March 2004.

candidate be a woman in order to avoid women being placed at the bottom of the parties' lists. Despite CPA opposition, therefore, relatively strong quotas were eventually adopted in Iraq after extensive mobilization by Iraqi women (Hogan 2004). Indeed, convinced of the need to include women in the new regime, many individual women risked their lives to stand for political office, even running in secret to avoid being targeted by religious fundamentalists (Feminist Wire 2005).

## CONCLUSIONS

The rapid spread of gender quotas around the world in recent years, combined with the form and timing of quota proposals, points to international and transnational policy diffusion across national quota debates. In this article, I evaluate four existing stories regarding quota adoption, and then turn to the fourth account—quotas are supported by international norms and transnational sharing—as a means for analyzing the connections among various quota campaigns. With the help of the literature on international norms, I identify four distinct dynamics of quota reform—international imposition, transnational emulation, international tipping, and international blockage—which, I argue, become apparent only when quota campaigns are viewed as a global phenomenon. Grounded in the details of individual cases, this lens situates all debates within a larger world sequence of quota reforms, revealing that various campaigns are related to one another in that they react to the same international stimulus, share information across national borders, receive a boost from international developments, or deflate through contact with international actors. By the same token, this perspective suggests that national debates do not simply follow international trends, but rather interact in a variety of ways with international and transnational actors and ideas. In recognizing and theorizing the multiple processes of policy diffusion, this article thus serves a crucial theory-building purpose by utilizing the international and transnational dimensions of quota campaigns in order to expand the frame of reference to connect and identify similarities and differences among quota debates.

The existence of these four paths to quota reform, in turn, implies several possible veins for future research on candidate gender quotas. First, the association between dynamics and configurations of actors calls for closer analysis of domestic coalitions of support, which affect how demands for gender quotas are understood and formulated in specific

national contexts, especially when they originate in international and transnational discussions. For example, are quotas more likely to be adopted—or to be more effective—when they result from top-down decisions or bottom-up mobilization? Second, the intersection between dynamics and various political processes—most obviously, postconflict reconstruction and democratic innovation—points to the need to consider the domestic political structures that shape how demands for increased female representation are translated into public policies at both the national and political party levels. For instance, how do periods of political stability—or, alternatively, moments of political change—affect quota adoption and implementation? Third, the presence of distinct dynamics across domestic contexts raises questions about possible relationships between the origins of quota reforms and the impact of these policies on women's overall levels of political representation, as international and transnational activism may appear more or less legitimate across different countries. For example, do the international origins of quota policies make them more or less likely to have an impact on the political status quo?

Developing a solid body of research in these three directions will require careful study of individual cases that is attentive to the broader global context of quota reforms. As this article demonstrates, all quota debates have international and transnational dimensions, no matter how local they appear, at the same time that different countries experience distinct dynamics of policy change. These patterns signal the need—at least in the literature on gender quotas—to move away from simple accounts of diffusion and to recognize the multiple processes shaping the spread of policy innovations worldwide.

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