

# The Global Use of Gender Quotas in Politics – controversial, yet popular

“Who runs the world”, Edinburgh, Nov.12, 2015

*by*

*Drude Dahlerup, professor of political science at  
Stockholm University, and advisor to UN Women*

# A new discourse presented by contemporary women's movements

- European Women's Lobby under the slogan '*No Modern European Democracy without Gender Equality*'. 2008 campaign
- “The current under-representation of women in most elected assemblies in Europe, including in the European Parliament, is a serious democratic deficit threatening the legitimacy of European institutions and political parties”. ([www.womenslobby.org](http://www.womenslobby.org)).

# World Average 2015 (single or lower Houses of Parliament)

World Average: 22.9 % women

Nordic countries	41.1 %
Americas	27.4 %
Europe (OSCE), incl.Nordic	25.8 %
Sub-Saharan Africa	23.4 %
Arab states	19.0 %
Asia	19.0 %
Pacific	13.1 %

- [WWW.IPU.ORG](http://WWW.IPU.ORG)

# Women in Parliament

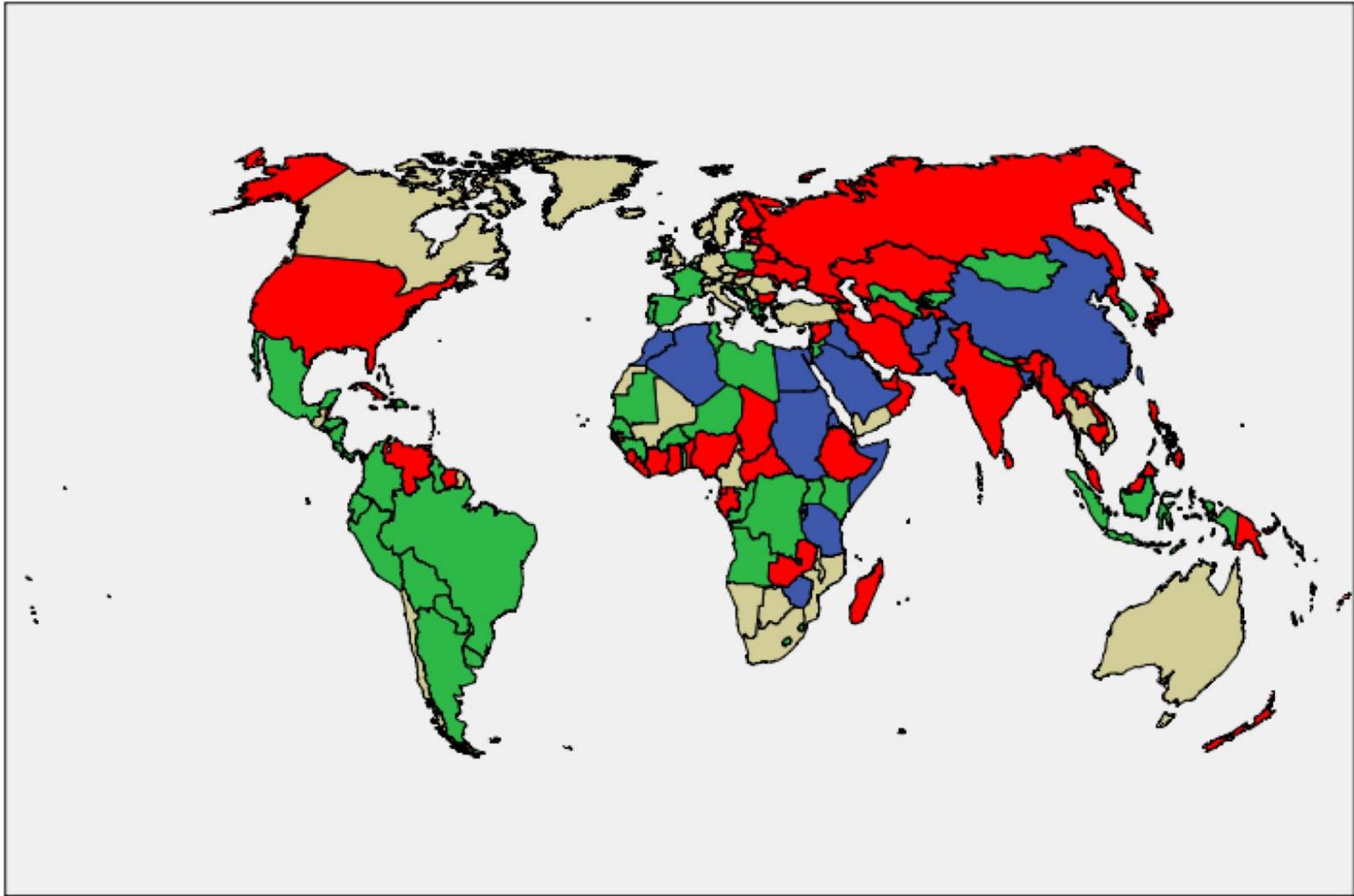
## Top ranking countries in 2015

	Country	Women in parliament, percentage (election year)	Quotas	Election system
1.	Rwanda	64,0 (2013)	Quotas by law	PR
2.	Bolivia	53,1 (2014)	Quotas by law	Mixed
3	Cuba	48.9 (2013)	NA	One party
4.	Seychelles	43.8 (2011)	No Quotas	SMD
5.	Sweden	43.5 (2014)	Party Quotas	PR
6.	Senegal	42.7 (2012)	Quotas by law	Mixed
7.	Mexico	42.4 (2015)	Quotas by law	Mixed
8.	Ecuador	41,6 (2013)	Party Quotas	PR
9.	Finland	41.5 (2015)	No Quotas	PR
10	Namibia	41,3 (2014)	Party Quotas	PR
11	South Africa	40,8 (2014)	Party Quotas	PR
12	Nicaragua	40.2 (2011)	Quotas by law	PR
13	Iceland	39.7 (2013)	Party Quotas	PR
14	Norway	39,6 (2013)	Party Quotas	PR
15	Mozamb.	39.6 (2014)	Party Quotas	PR

Election day figures  
45 countries over 30  
% women in their  
parliament (lower or  
single house)

# Electoral Gender Quotas

- 86 countries have introduced electoral gender quotas in their constitution or electoral law (ex. Rwanda, Belgium, Bolivia).
- In around 30 other countries some political parties make use of voluntary party quotas for their electoral list (ex. Sweden, Norway, Iceland)
- 
- *A first global overview:*
- Drude Dahlerup (ed): “Women, Quotas and Politics”. Routledge 2006.
- *The global web site:* [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)
- *Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*, 2014. International Idea, the Inter-parliamentary Union and Stockholm University.



■ Reserved seats for women   ■ Legal gender quota   ■ Voluntary gender quota   ■ No gender quotas

# Nordic legislation on public commissions

- Since the 1980s, all the five Nordic countries have adopted legislation or regulation on equal participation of women and men in all *public* commissions, committees and boards.
- An organization, party or department, which is entitled to one member in a new public commission, has to come up with two names, one man and one women, enabling the minister to appoint a gender balanced commission.

# Norway 2008 Corporate Quotas

- At least 40 % of each gender among the members of the boards of the big companies and municipal companies – public as well as *private*.
- Now followed by Iceland, France, Spain and Italy.
- Denmark and the European Union: 'soft' quotas = recommendation, targets
- Sweden: quotas, if parity not achieved before 2017.

# The Diagnosis

- 23 % of the members of the world's parliament are women
- Few women in company boards
- Why are women under-represented?
- Why are men over-represented?

# Two main diagnoses of men's over-representation

## 1. Focus on women.

- *Because there are not enough qualified women candidates*
- *Because women do not vote for women*

## 2. Focus on the institutions and parties.

- The political parties are the gatekeepers to elected positions.
- *Why are parties not more inclusive in terms of women and minorities? 'Old boy's network'*

# Two discourses on women's under-representation in political institutions

- *The incremental track discourse:*

1. Problem-diagnosis

Women's lack of resources and old prejudice

2. Goal

'More women in politics'

3. Strategy

Increase women's resources and commitment

4. General perception of the cause of history:

Equal representation may take decades, but will eventually be achieved in due course as the country develops.

# *The fast track discourse:*

## **1. Problem-diagnosis**

**Exclusion and discrimination**

## **2. Goal**

**'Gender balance in politics'**

## **3. Strategy**

**Affirmative actions, electoral gender quotas**

## **4. General perception of the cause of history:**

**Women's representation does not increase by some historical necessity.  
Backlash may even be possible.**

*\* Source: Dahlerup & Freidenvall: "Why Scandinavia is no longer the model".  
International Feminist Journal of Politics, March 2005.*

# The over 30%- countries

- In the 1990s only 5 countries over 30%, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.
- In 2015 45 countries over 30%, 46 incl. Scotland

*“Saturation without parity”*

- Recent decrease or stagnation: Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Scottish parliament

# Class ceiling smashed?

- From 1980s and 90s, women have obtained a share of the higher positions within Nordic parliaments corresponding to their number of MPs.
- The law of increasing disproportions – no longer in parliament, but still at local council level - and in academia and business.

# Concepts

- Affirmative action, positive action, temporary special measures, quotas
- *If everything in society was fair, there were no need affirmative actions. But in all countries there are direct as well as indirect discrimination (structural barriers) against women.*
- Quotas are not discrimination of men, but compensation for present barriers women meet in politics

# Three main types of gender quotas in politics

- 1. *Party quotas*, adopted by individual parties in a country (setting % of the candidates)
- 2. *Candidate quotas by law*, binding for all parties (setting % of the candidates)
- 3. *Reserved seat* quotas by law (number of the elected – guaranteed seats for women or minorities)
- (4. Financial incentives)

# Importance of the electoral system

- A proportional representation system (PR) with party lists with many candidates is more favorable to increasing women's representation
- Majoritarian systems (FPTP) with only one candidate to be elected (and only one candidate per party or individual parties) disfavor women.
- PR tends to give higher representation for women and is easier to combine with a quota system.

# Defining quotas

- Gender quotas are an equality policy measure (affirmative action).
- Quotas imply setting a fixed goal for the recruitment of women or other under-represented groups in order to rapidly change an unwanted inequality
- Quotas may be gender neutral or for women

# Sanctions for non-compliance:

- *legal quota systems:*
- 1. Rejection of the list (Costa Rica, Spain, Slovenia, East Timor, France at the local level) – the most effective
- 2. Financial penalty (France at the national level,  
• (Portugal))
- (3. Financial incentives if a party has over a certain number of women as candidates (Giorgia, Ireland) or among the elected (Columbia))

# Temporary measure?

## **1. Institutionalized parity.**

France: "Only women and men together can define the common good".

*or*

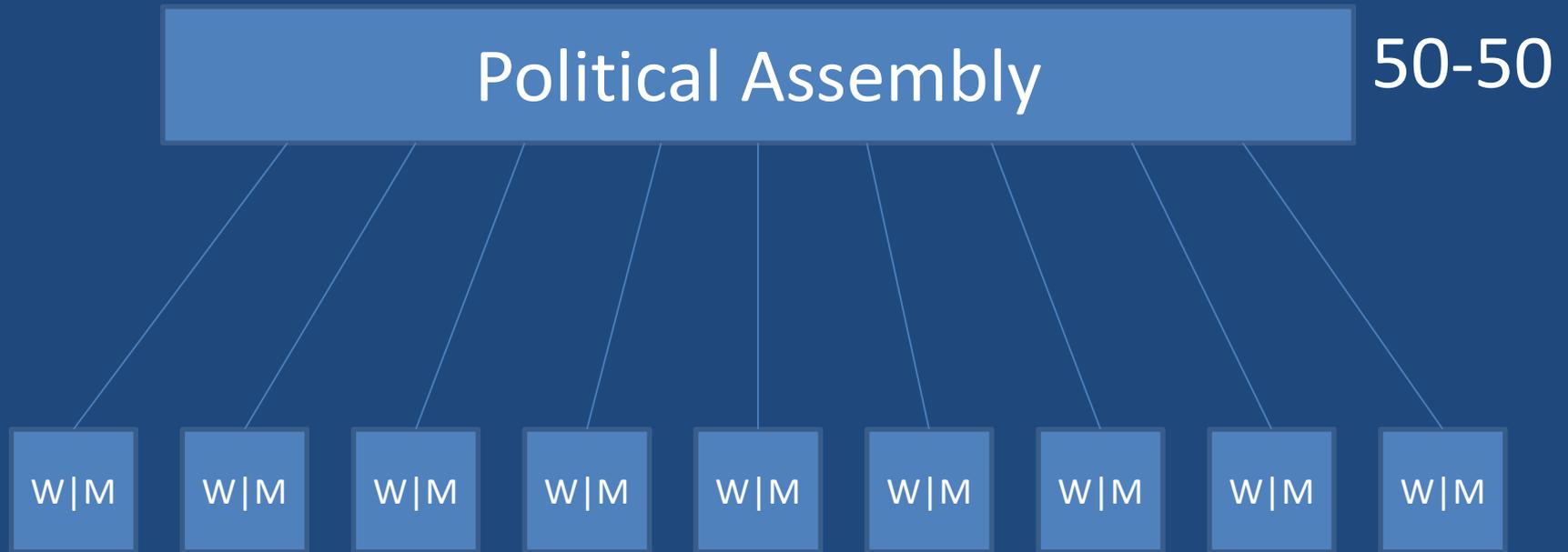
## **2. Temporary measure?**

2.1. Sunset clause: e.g. until 2020 or 2030    or

2.2 To be removed after 3 elections

2.3 Until women reach at least 30 %

# Institutionalized Parity in Majority Systems



Each constituency/village elects one woman and one man

# The example of France

- Majority system: Single member districts in 2 rounds
- Law: All political parties shall nominate 50 % female and 50 % male candidates among all their candidates for the National Assembly – horizontal quota.
- Financial penalty for non-compliance. The big parties did not comply.
- First Election: 19 %, today: 26 %
- Conclusion: 50-50 among the candidates does not necessarily give an gender balanced result, because the political parties may nominate women in their weakest constituencies.
- 50-50 % of the winnable seats?

# The amazing example of Bolivia

- Mixed electoral system.
- From 25% (2010) to 53 % women (2014) in one election!
- PR election: 60 seats. Parity and alternation; in case of odd numbers priority is given to a woman.
- FPTP election: 70 constituencies. Parity (50% of candidates must be women),

# Adding up systems

- Palestine, local. There shall be at least 2 women in any local council.
- If not obtained in the election, the missing 1-2 women are added (from among the running up candidates/the best losers).
- Scotland: Is it possible to use the regional PR-lists not just to secure proportionality among the political parties, but also according to gender?

# Rank-order rules are important

- *Candidate quotas:*
- 1. Zipper system – alternation
- 2. The top two cannot be of the same sex (Belgium + 50 % for whole list)
- 3. Two out of every five on the list. Spain
- 4. One out of every group of 4 candidates must be a woman (East Timor)

# The Paradox of Quota Adoption

- Gender quotas for elections are only about the numerical representation.
- *But feminists, who support gender quotas, want women to make a difference in politics,*
- *while male dominated parliaments have passed quota laws based on mixed motives.*

# Electoral gender quotas

- Only regulates the descriptive representation (the numbers).
- No miracle cure! Many additional strategies needed.
- But quotas work!

OXFORD

# **BREAKING MALE DOMINANCE IN OLD DEMOCRACIES**

EDITED BY  
DRUDE DAHLERUP  
& MONIQUE LEYENAAR