

# The Role of International Organizations in the Adoption of Gender Quotas : Afghanistan and Iraq as Case Studies

Ülkü Demirdöğen

Professor of International Relations

Istanbul Kültür Üniversitesi

Atakoy Campus

Istanbul/Turkey

[u.demirdogen@iku.edu.tr](mailto:u.demirdogen@iku.edu.tr)

Paper presented at the Conference of the International Political Science Association

Madrid, Spain

July 2012

## Abstract

International organizations like the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the European Union have been effective in devising international norms by issuing resolutions embracing quotas for women. The most important contributions in this regard are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), both elaborated within the framework of the United Nations, leading the way for an international regime on gender equality. It is widely observed that in most cases, gender quotas have been adopted following the recommendations issued by international organizations.

This paper analyzes the role of international organizations in the adoption of gender quotas in Afghanistan and Iraq as case studies of post-conflict societies where international organizations seem to play an important role in pressing for the adoption of gender quotas.

## Introduction

Recent literature has improved our understanding of quota adoption; we no longer focus only on domestic factors but also take into consideration the role of international organizations (both as IGOs and NGOs) when analyzing the causes and dynamics underlying the adoption of gender quotas. International norms and transnational sharing are important factors shaping national quota debates (Krook 2006). It is remarkable that “the timing of quota proposals is clearly clustered around certain years” suggesting that gender quotas have been adopted following the recommendations issued by international organizations, namely the United Nations (Krook 2006, 311). The gender policies by date of adoption and quota type globally [Table 1] demonstrate a pattern: after several decades of stagnation, the number of countries which have adopted quotas increased slightly over the course of the 1980s and then jumped dramatically during the 1990s and 2000s (Ibid).

This sudden jump in the number of countries that have adopted gender quotas in the last several decades supports the observation that the origins of these shifts in gender policies can be located in international organizations’ decisions/documents aiming the improvement of women’s political representation. The most important of these documents are the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations in 1979, and the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA), approved in 1995. CEDAW entered into force in 1981 and has been ratified by 187 countries. Ratification of CEDAW, becoming signatories to various platforms of action and other regional conventions constitute a set of norms and rules related to gender equality.

International organizations have an important role in shaping, defining and diffusing norms. The concern with international norms has developed most prominently in the field of international organization. Norms in the framework of regime theory are important in setting the expectations and, therefore, the behaviour of states (Young 1989; Krasner 1983). There is a significant literature on the role of international organizations in norm development (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Goertz and Diehl 1992). Apart from the United Nations, other international organizations have issued recommendations that involve gender equality and 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 African Union, and the Organization of American States among others, and have been influential in creating a gender equality regime.

Gender quotas can be viewed as features of modern statehood since 1980s. The world polity theory of Meyer and colleagues state that “many features of the contemporary nation state derive from worldwide models constructed and propagated through global cultural and associational processes” (Meyer and Prügl 1999). International organizations play a key role in spreading models for legitimate action or norms. The rapid increase in the number of countries which have adopted gender quotas in the 1990s and 2000s can be explained by their

integration into the world polity by ratifying the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other recommendations promoting gender equality and gender quotas. Another indicator of a country's world polity ties could be the increase in the number of women's INGOs which provide organizational and informational resources for domestic activists since the 1980s.

## **Origins and Evolution of Global Gender Equality Norms in International Organizations**

The following international organizations have been instrumental in developing the global norms shaping the gender equality regime and devising mechanisms aiming women's political representation.

- **The United Nations**

A global gender equality regime has developed, identifiable by its norms, principles and legal instruments. The UN, as a global intergovernmental organization, has been pivotal in developing the global gender equality regime. In this vein, the UN has played an important role in setting the agenda for women's rights in general and gender quotas in particular. We can trace the origins and evolution of global gender equality norms in the UN starting with the first year of its existence – the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In the annual meetings of the CSW, the UN policy on women and gender has been defined and elaborated for years. In honour of the CSW's 25th anniversary in 1972, 1975 was declared International Women's Year (IWY). Among the efforts that led to the designation of 1975 as IWY, the most important efforts belonged to the women's organizations that were part of the CSW, as well as to women delegations of member countries. CSW designated the years 1975-1985 as the UN Decade for Women.

The appearance of a global women's movement as part of an emerging global civil society had its origins in the processes generated by the UN Decade for Women. It was within this context that women from around the world first encountered each other in a sustainable manner which let them focus on their position and condition.

During this decade, three world conferences were held by the UN in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985. In Mexico City emphasis had been on the role of governments – to set up special mechanisms, to change laws, to provide services for the most marginalized women. In Copenhagen, the role of women's organizations in generating political will was recognized, as well as their role in promoting self-reliance. The final conference of the Decade in Nairobi was an appraisal of the progress made since the conferences in Mexico-City and Copenhagen, with a focus on the strategies that would take these forward. The Nairobi broke new ground since it contained measures for achieving equality at the national level; governments were to set their own priorities based on their development policies and resource capabilities (Kardam 2004). One of the significant

outcomes of the UN Decade for Women was the linking of the political work of the activists to the professional and technical work of practitioners and policy-makers in the field of socio-economic development.

The most important outcome of the UN Decade for Women has been the acceptance of CEDAW in 1979, which is often referred to as an international bill of rights for women. CEDAW declared that “state parties shall take all appropriate measures and eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life of the country” (art.7). Ratified by 187 states, CEDAW is the legal instrument on gender equality. The basic principles that constitute this regime are the prohibition of discrimination against women and the active promotion of equality between the sexes. Article 1 of CEDAW gives a comprehensive definition of “discrimination against women” as follows:

“any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”.

A fourth conference was organized in Beijing, in 1995. As Krook and True point out Beijing Conference “produced a Platform for Action which focused on 12 ‘strategic objectives’, but contained references to two ‘mega-strategies’ for achieving equality between women and men: gender-balanced decision-making, calling for the equal participation of women as policy-makers, and gender mainstreaming, highlighting the need for a gender perspective in all phases of policy-making” (Krook and True 2008).

As Kardam notes the norms of a regime define the rights and obligations of actors by establishing standards to overcome discrimination; the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action both define the rights and obligations of governments based on principles of equality and nondiscrimination (Kardam 2004). By making a comparison between the Nairobi and Beijing Conferences, Kardam underlines that “the 1985 Nairobi Conference broke new ground by declaring that *all* issues were women’s issues... in Beijing, the focus shifted from women to the concept of gender and .. this change strongly affirmed that gender equality was of universal concern” (Ibid, 91).

Beijing was the largest United Nations world conference ever held (West 1999). Tens of thousands more women were mobilised by the process in countries around the world in a proliferation of women’s networking. This networking involved many local, national and regional conferences in preparation for the ‘major event’ world conferences and many follow-up meetings and actions to ensure their outcomes were implemented (Alvarez 1999). Women’s international NGOs have empowered the United Nations World Conferences and in turn, the United Nations has opened spaces for their global influence (Clark et al., 1998).

In the years following Beijing, gender-balanced decision-making continued to be at the center of the UN gender equality policy. Five years later, the UN General Assembly convened a special session to review and appraise progress on the Platform for Action (Beijing+5); in Resolution S-23/3, the Assembly noted that women had achieved a higher proportion of

positions in decision-making in some countries, which it attributed to “affirmative and positive action policies, including quota systems or voluntary agreements (paragraph 22)” (Krook and True 2008).

- **The Inter-Parliamentary Union**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union considers that the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995) are commitments of the member states as well. The IPU participated in the preparatory process of the Beijing Conference, contributed to it through various initiatives and is actively engaged in the follow-up to the Conference.

The Meeting of Women MPs has, since October 1995, initiated the practice of holding a general debate every six months on national action to follow up the Beijing Platform for Action. This is carried out in parallel with the follow-up to the Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life.

The Plan of Action, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Council (26 March 1994, Paris), is based on the affirmation that “ years after the adoption of the convention on the Political Rights of Women and despite undeniable progress, political and parliamentary life remains dominated by men in all countries”. It is also inspired by the following vision of democracy: “The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population”. In Part C, article 3 of the Plan of Action, gender quotas are specifically mentioned:

“It is proposed that measures be taken to give equally qualified men and women equal opportunities to belong to decision-making bodies... these measures may include affirmative action measures. Wherever the measure chosen is a quota system, it is proposed that the quota should not target women but that, in a spirit of equity, it may be established that neither sex may occupy a proportion of seats inferior to a given percentage” (www.ipu.org).

A Specialized IPU Conference on “Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics” took place in New Delhi on 14-18 February 1997, on the invitation of the Parliament of India. The Conference was the first worldwide political meeting on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. In the “Concluding Statement by the President on the Outcome of the Conference”, there are specific recommendations concerning gender quotas:

“- Many participants favored the introduction of quota systems to promote women’s access to the governing bodies of parties, where on average, they account for scarcely 10 per cent...A clear consensus emerged in favour of quotas targeting candidatures rather than seats in Parliament... several delegates stressed the need for other mechanisms such as the reservation of a certain percentage of seats in local and national representative institutions to compensate for women’s poor chances of being elected”(www.ipu.org).

- **The Socialist International**

The Socialist International supports the struggle of women for equal rights and opportunities everywhere in the world. The Declaration of Principles, adopted by the 18th Congress in Stockholm, in June 1989, states that “The Socialist International specifically endorses the following measures: public backing for full and equal participation of women in the social and political activities of every country by positive steps which ensure women’s representation at all levels of decision making” ([www.socialistinternational.org](http://www.socialistinternational.org)).

In the “Women and Power-Sharing: Leadership and Strategies” conference in Oslo, 1998, one of the recommendations involved specific reference to the adoption of affirmative action:

“Measures must be implemented to ensure that women are represented at all levels of government and party structure. Affirmative action must be taken to promote women within these institutions, i.e. the preparation of more gender-balanced lists of candidates for elections of any kind; the assurance of gender-balanced representation in party structures; the promotion of women to leadership positions, such as ministries and executive positions in international institutions” ([www.socintwomen.org/en/resolutions/19980515-oslo-wpsls.html](http://www.socintwomen.org/en/resolutions/19980515-oslo-wpsls.html)).

Apart from the Conferences held in Buenos Aires (1999) on “Implementing a Gender Perspective in Public Policies” and in Paris(1999) titled “From Beijing to the 21st Century: SIW’s Perspective” where measures to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making were underlined, the meeting in Stuttgart, Germany (2007) titled “SIW Centenary” strongly emphasized the adoption of gender quotas :” The quota system has proven to be the most effective and efficient tool to redress the imbalance between women and men in politics” ([www.socintwomen.org/en/resolutions/20070908-stuttgart-siwc.html](http://www.socintwomen.org/en/resolutions/20070908-stuttgart-siwc.html)).

- **The Council of Europe**

In order to promote genuine democracy and human rights in its member states, one of the Council of Europe’s priorities in the field of equality between women and men is to ensure a more balanced participation of both sexes in political and public decision-making. The concept of parity was first discussed at the seminar “The Democratic Principle of Equal Representation: 40 Years of Council of Europe Activity” (Strasbourg, 6-7 November 1989).

The Assembly of the Council considers that the lack of equal representation of women and men in political and public decision-making is a threat to the legitimacy of democracies. It is also regarded as a violation of the human right of gender equality, and thus the Assembly recommends that “member states rectify this situation as a priority associating the gender equality and antidiscrimination provisions in their constitutions and their electoral laws with the necessary exception allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex, if they have not done so already, as a precondition recognized by the Council of Europe’s European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and fully

implementing the recommendations contained in Committee of Ministers Recommendation, Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making and in Recommendation 273 (2009) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in particular as concerns changing electoral systems and introducing gender quotas” (<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/WorkingDocs/Doc09/EDOC12097.htm>).

- **The European Union**

The debate on the concept of parity started in the European Union (EU) at the first “European Summit of Women in Power” held in Athens, Greece in November 1992. The Athens Declaration was issued at the end of the Summit. Signed by twenty women leaders, it openly stated that “equality of women and men imposed parity in the representation and the administration of Nations”. The Athens Declaration marked the beginning of a process, which is recognized as having been decisive in most member states. The following points were underlined in the Athens Declaration:

“A democratic system should entail equal participation in public and political life by its citizens. We demand equality of participation by women and men in public and political decision-making. We underline the need for changes to the structure of decision-making procedures in order to ensure such equality in practice. Formal and informal equality between women and men is a fundamental human right. Women represent more than half the population. Equality requires parity in the representation and administration of Nations”([www.eurit.it/Eurplace/diana/ateneen.html](http://www.eurit.it/Eurplace/diana/ateneen.html)).

Four years after Athens, a second summit was held in Rome, Italy, and ended with a new political declaration entitled: “The Charter of Rome: Women for the Renewal of Politics and Society”.

The 1990s saw the implementation of a large number of initiatives all over Europe. A momentum was created among interested parties. The issue entered the EU mainstream in March 1996 when the Council of Ministers called on the European Commission to “provide an opinion on how to improve the representation of women in decision making in the institutions of the EU and the member states” (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ>)

A recommendation for the balanced participation of women and men in decision making was subsequently presented to the Council and adopted in December 1996.

- **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe**

The fifty-six OSCE participating states have adopted several specific policies and measures to support gender equality and women’s participation in politics. An Action Plan for the

Promotion of Gender Equality was accepted by the Ministerial Council on 7 December 2004, which stated that:

“The peace and welfare of the world require maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields... Participating States are therefore recommended to establish or strengthen existing mechanisms for ensuring gender equality, inter alia by making available the services of an impartial and independent person or body, such as an Ombudsman/Human Rights Commissioner, to address gender related discrimination against individual citizens... the ODIHR will assist in the development and implementation of specific programmes and activities to promote women’s rights, to increase the role of women at all levels of decision-making, and to promote equality between women and men throughout the OSCE area, particularly through education in gender awareness” ([www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org))

Another document pertaining to gender equality in decision-making is “Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life” signed by the Ministerial Council on 2 December, 2009. In this Ministerial Decision, the Council calls on the participating States to “Consider possible legislative measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and especially in decision-making... take necessary steps to establish effective national mechanisms for measuring women’s equal participation and representation” ([www.osce.org/mc/40710](http://www.osce.org/mc/40710)).

- **The African Union**

The African Union’s 2003 Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa calls for equal gender representation. On 26 October 2005 the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, also called the “Maputo Protocol” and part of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, has entered into force having been ratified by the fifteen member states.

This protocol covers a broad range of women’s rights, including the elimination of discrimination against women, the right to dignity, the right to life, the integrity and security of the person.

The African Union’s Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa describes the right to participation in the political and decision-making process in Article 9:

“States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that: a) women participate without any discrimination in all elections; b) women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes..” ([www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org))

- **Organization of American States**

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) is the main body that provides technical support to gender mainstreaming policies, processes and activities, both within the OAS and its member states.

Plan of Action of the CIM on Women's Participation in Power and Decision-Making Structures, adopted by the 28th Assembly of Delegates, in 1998, describes the areas for priority action as follows:

“Promote the modernization of existing law to enshrine the principles of gender equity and equal opportunity at the decision-making level, and to ensure that mechanisms for enforcing those laws exist; promote the reform of electoral laws and statutes of political parties to include mechanisms that guarantee equal participation by men and women..” ([www.oas.org/en/default.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/default.asp))

Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality was accepted on 28 April 2000. Lines of Action were stated as follows:

“Promote also the study and, if applicable, the revision of national law in order to encourage full compliance with other international commitments adopted by regional and global conferences in which the member states have participated, or which have been approved by their legislatures, with the objective of ensuring equality and gender equity ... implement the Plan of Action of the CIM on Women's Participation in Power and Decision-making Structures” (<http://summit-americas.org>).

## **The Adoption of Quotas Worldwide**

Gender quotas are one of the key institutional innovations in the politics of the late twentieth century. They come in three forms: 1) Reserved seats are set aside for women in parliaments; 2) Legislative quotas require a certain percentage of political parties' nominees to be women; 3) Voluntary party quotas involve individual parties promising to nominate a certain percentage of women. The first two categories are called *legal quotas* and usually require amendments to constitutions or electoral laws.

‘Table 1’ charts quotas spread by decades. A handful of countries adopted some type of quota prior to the 1970s. The first quotas were sometimes small, such as Pakistan's, which set aside 10 out of 310 seats in the National Assembly in its first Constitution in 1956, or vague, such as China's, which in 1955 stated that “an ‘appropriate’ and increasing proportion of women should be elected” (Krook 2009, 237). In the fifty years between 1930 and 1980, only ten countries established quotas, followed by twelve additional countries in the 1980s. During the 1980s, left-leaning political parties in consolidated democracies such as Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, and Sweden adopted gender quotas voluntarily.

In the 1990s, quotas appeared in more than fifty states, and nearly forty states joined them in the 2000s. In these two decades, dozens of countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, and Asia influenced by the norms issued by the international

organizations adopted legal and voluntary party quotas. As a result, more than one hundred countries now have some sort of quota policy, with seventy-five per cent of these measures being passed during the last two decades (Krook 2006, 2).

The required percentage for legal as well as party quotas ranges from Nepal’s five per cent to forty per cent in Costa Rica and fifty per cent in France. While most quota regulations target women, some are formulated in a gender-neutral way, e.g. requiring no more than 60 and no less than 40 per cent of either sex ( Dahlerup and Nordlund 2004, 92). This type of gender-neutral quotas imply a maximum for female as well as male candidates, whereas women-only requirements do not. Most quota systems aim at correcting the under representation of women historically and some countries like Argentina, Costa Rica and Belgium use “double quotas” to make this correction. Double quotas combine the legal requirement for a certain minimum percentage of women with rules about gendering the rank order of candidates on the lists (Ibid).

Constitutional amendments and electoral laws are the means of adopting quotas and they appear to have more force but it has been observed that they are not necessarily better than party quotas when evaluated from the point of implementation. The recent global trend to adopt some form of gender quota system for election to political institutions through constitutional amendments and elaboration of electoral laws has created a fast track to women’s equal representation (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005), mostly through the influence/pressure of international norms and organizations. In general, the Scandinavian countries represent the incremental track to equal participation for women and men; it took almost sixty years for Denmark, Norway and Sweden to exceed the twenty per cent threshold, and 70 years to reach 30 per cent (Dahlerup and Nordlund 2004).

In contrast to incremental track seen in Scandinavian and some Western countries, today the world is suprisingly witnessing the rapid adoption of gender quotas in countries such as Argentina, Costa Rica, South Africa and Rwanda as a fast track development. Women’s representation jumped to 49% in Rwanda in 2003, 30% in South Africa in 1994 and 35% in Costa Rica after the adoption of gender quotas.

Table 1

*Gender quota policies by date of adoption and quota type*

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Reserved Seats</i>	<i>Party Quotas</i>	<i>Legislative Quotas</i>
<i>1930s</i>	<i>India</i>		
<i>1940s</i>	<i>Taiwan</i>		
<i>1950s</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>China</i>	

<i>1960s</i>	<i>Ghana</i>		
<i>1970s</i>	<i>Bangladesh</i>		
	<i>Egypt*</i>	<i>Israel</i>	
		<i>Netherlands</i>	
		<i>Norway</i>	
<i>1980s</i>	<i>Uganda</i>		
		<i>Brazil</i>	
		<i>Chile</i>	
		<i>Uruguay</i>	
		<i>Canada</i>	
		<i>Austria</i>	
		<i>Belgium</i>	

*Table 1. Continued*

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Reserved Seats</i>	<i>Party Quotas</i>	<i>Legislative Quotas</i>
<i>1980s</i>		<i>Denmark*</i>	
<i>(continued)</i>		<i>Germany</i>	
		<i>Iceland</i>	
		<i>Sweden</i>	
		<i>United Kingdom</i>	
<i>1990s</i>	<i>Kenya</i>	<i>Cape Verde</i>	<i>Namibia**</i>
	<i>Sudan</i>	<i>Mozambique</i>	
	<i>Tanzania</i>	<i>Namibia**</i>	
		<i>Senegal</i>	
		<i>South Africa</i>	
	<i>Nepal</i>	<i>India***</i>	
	<i>Philippines**</i>	<i>North Korea</i>	
		<i>Philippines**</i>	
		<i>South Korea***</i>	
		<i>Taiwan***</i>	

<i>Armenia**</i>	<i>Armenia**</i>
<i>Czech Republic</i>	
<i>Estonia</i>	
<i>Hungary</i>	
<i>Kyrgyzstan</i>	
<i>Lithuania</i>	
<i>Poland</i>	
<i>Slovakia</i>	
<i>Slovenia</i>	
<i>Dominican Republic**</i>	<i>Argentina</i>
<i>El Salvador</i>	<i>Bolivia</i>
<i>Haiti</i>	<i>Brazil</i>

*Table 1. Continued*

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Reserved Seats</i>	<i>Party Quotas</i>	<i>Legislative Quotas</i>
<i>1990s</i>		<i>Mexico***</i>	<i>Colombia*</i>
<i>(continued)</i>		<i>Nicaragua</i>	<i>Costa Rica</i>
		<i>Venezuela**</i>	<i>Dominican Republic**</i>
			<i>Ecuador</i>
			<i>Guyana</i>
			<i>Panama</i>
			<i>Peru</i>
			<i>Venezuela ***</i>
		<i>Turkey</i>	
		<i>Australia</i>	
		<i>Fiji</i>	
		<i>Cyprus</i>	<i>Belgium</i>
		<i>France**</i>	<i>France**</i>
		<i>Greece</i>	<i>Italy***</i>
		<i>Ireland</i>	
		<i>Italy**</i>	

*Luxembourg*

*Portugal*

---

<i>2000s</i>	<i>Burkina Faso</i>	<i>Angola</i>	<i>Liberia</i>
	<i>Burundi</i>	<i>Botswana</i>	<i>Niger</i>
	<i>Djibouti</i>	<i>Cameroon</i>	<i>Rwanda**</i>
	<i>Eritrea</i>	<i>Equatorial</i>	
	<i>Rwanda**</i>	<i>Guinea</i>	
		<i>Ethiopia</i>	
		<i>Ivory Coast</i>	
		<i>Kenya</i>	
		<i>Malawi</i>	
		<i>Mali</i>	

*Table 1. Continued*

---

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Reserved Seats</i>	<i>Party Quotas</i>	<i>Legislative Quotas</i>
<i>2000s</i>		<i>Sierra Leone</i>	
<i>(continued)</i>		<i>Zimbabwe</i>	
		<i>Thailand</i>	<i>Indonesia</i>
			<i>South Korea***</i>
		<i>Bosnia-</i>	<i>Bosnia-</i>
		<i>Herzegovinia**</i>	<i>Herzegovinia**</i>
		<i>Croatia</i>	<i>Macedonia**</i>
		<i>Macedonia**</i>	<i>Romania</i>
		<i>Moldova</i>	<i>Serbia and</i>
			<i>Montenegro</i>
			<i>Uzbekistan</i>
			<i>Honduras</i>
			<i>Mexico***</i>
	<i>Jordan</i>	<i>Algeria</i>	<i>Afghanistan</i>
	<i>Morocco**</i>	<i>Morocco**</i>	<i>Iraq</i>

(\*) Measure later repealed.

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

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

This chart draws on Krook 2006, pp. 312-13.

## **The Adoption of Gender Quotas in Post-Conflict Societies**

Since quotas have been discussed in the restructuring processes of post-war Afghanistan and Iraq by international organizations as fast track policies, it is logical asking the questions “how was women’s representation placed on the agenda of these post-conflict societies?” and “who were the actors and how did they interact?”

Afghanistan and Iraq share some common characteristics as post-conflict societies which have adopted gender quotas. They are good examples in this regard for a growing demand for gender quotas in post-conflict countries. Both countries have experienced international involvement following an occupation by external forces. They are both in a state of transition building new institutions. Women’s organizations in both countries have strived for political representation and demanded for quota provisions as a fast track into politics from the start. The question whether these organizations struggled for the adoption of gender quotas on their own or did they receive help from other IGOs or INGOs is crucial when trying to understand the specific role of IOs in the adoption of these quotas in post-conflict environments.

There are some interesting similarities between Afghanistan and Iraq as post-conflict states. They have been occupied by external forces. They do not have a democratic past and have been subject to dictatorships: Saddam in Iraq and Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Another common characteristic is that in both countries strong tribal groups dominate the domestic political scene and both societies are fundamentally patriarchal. Women have been suppressed strongly in these strictly male dominated countries, although women’s position under the fundamentalist Taliban regime was quite different from that in Iraq, where women until recently had the highest education rate in the Arab region.

There are also some differences between Afghanistan and Iraq related to women’s political representation. Although the US, before occupying both countries, stated women’s rights as one of the reasons for liberating them, the case in Iraq concerning women’s rights was better than Afghanistan. The 1970 Iraqi Constitution had formally guaranteed equal rights to women and Iraq was one of the first countries to ratify CEDAW in 1986. In 1980 Iraqi women got the

right to vote and won 6.4% of the seats on the National Council (Norris 2007). Another interesting difference is that in Afghanistan, a transitional Afghan government with United Nations in a counseling role, has been in power since the occupation of the country; whereas in Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authorities (CPA) was put in charge by the US and the UK.

Keeping these similarities and differences in perspective, we can take a closer look at the developments that took place in these post-war countries concerning gender quotas within the framework of the the state-building processes which are dominated by external forces.

## **International organizations in the adoption of gender quotas in Afghanistan**

The United Nations has a history of involvement in Afghanistan, having established the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMIA) in December 1993 (Krook et al. 2010, 69). Another mission by the UN, which was called UNAMA (the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) was established in March 2002 to support the constitutional process. The UN has been an advocate of women's political representation and has mentioned gender quotas as one of the main methods through which to promote the inclusion of women in government. By adopting the UN Resolution 1325, which was passed by the Security Council in October 2000, member states were urged to ensure women's political participation in post-conflict regimes.

The adoption of reserved seats for women in post-conflict constitutional settlements, and their impact in traditional cultures, is exemplified best by the case of Afghanistan (Norris 2007). The reserved seats policy in Afghanistan was primarily driven by the top-down efforts of the UN (Krook et al. 2010, 66). In the restructuring process and constitution building of post-war Afghanistan, the UN was the key international actor as an IGO. The constitutional process in Afghanistan began on 5 December 2001, after the US invasion, with Bonn Agreement, which called for "the establishment of a broad based, gender sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government". The UN assumed a central role in bringing together the Afghan parties in the first place and initiate a dialogue between them. The UN, by sponsoring the initial meeting of Afghan political leaders in Bonn, reaffirmed its role in the reconstruction of the Afghan state. In this reconstruction process gender sensitivity was of vital importance to the international community, mainly the UN, given the extraordinary repression of women under the previous Taliban regime.

The Interim Administration, chaired by Hamid Karzai, was established as a result of the Bonn Agreement in December 2001 and Security Council Resolution 1383 (Dahlerup and Nordlund 2004, 91). The Afghanistan Constitution specified that women representatives must be included in both houses of the National Assembly, including the Wolesi Jirga (the House of the People) and in the Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders). As a result of UN pressure, two women were included as ministers in the Interim Administration (Bauer 2002), and three women in the Loya Jirga Commission (Dahlerup and Nordlund 2004).

The UN opted for women's representation in the years which preceded the adoption of the new Afghan constitution. As a result, significant number of women were present on the committees charged with drafting the new constitution. One fifth of the delegates to the Constitutional Loya Jirga were women. Women delegates assumed some positions of authority in the CLJ and were able to make their voices heard but to a limited extent. Sometimes they were not permitted to speak and their microphones were silenced. A Human Rights Watch Report noted that several women participants in the CLJ subsequently faced retaliation in the form of harassment, dismissal from their jobs and transfers to less desirable positions. Others reported that local authorities and commanders harassed them through phone calls or in face-to-face meetings upon their return from the Loya Jirga. Apart from threatening phone calls, Afghan women in the assembly faced death threats, slander and physical attacks. Under these circumstances, as some INGOs have observed, statements emerging from the transitional government on women's issues appear to demonstrate an appeasement of the international community concerning the advancement of the women's rights rather than a sincere commitment to gender equality.

While international pressures and international norms have influenced the preparations for the constitution and the adoption of gender quotas , there were some Afghan women organizations that acted as a sort of catalyst for these reforms. For instance, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN), comprising about 24 NGOs and over 1,000 individual members, was involved in civil society efforts to ensure that the constitution took women's views and interests into account (Kandiyoti, 2005). Women's groups (The Afghan Women's Network, the Afghan Women's Mission and the Revolutionary Association Of Afghan Women) mobilized, including those who had been exiled, calling for 25% female representation in the new assembly and a woman's Bill of Rights in the Conferences held in March and September 2003. However, these conferences were coordinated by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, an organization created and financed by the UN.

The new Afghan constitution, agreed in January 2004, cited that women would be included in both houses of the national assembly. This constitution specified the total number of seats and that at least two women should be directly elected to the Wolesi Jirga from each of the 34 existing provinces (Norris, 2007). The constitution reserves 27% of seats for women in the lower house, the Wolesi Jirga and 17% in the upperhouse, the Meshrano Jirga. It is widely observed that without the international incentives from the international community led by the UN, the US State Department and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Project there would have been no quotas in Afghanistan. Documents provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women indicate UN's commitment to the adoption of mechanisms guaranteeing female participation in Afghanistan. In addition to exerting pressure on the transitional government, UNIFEM facilitated the creation of the Gender and Law Working Group. This group made recommendations for revisions to the draft constitution that were in turn submitted to the President, the Constitutional Commission and the media. UNIFEM also gave technical support to female delegates who worked together to gather the required 150 signatories to amend Article 83 of the Constitution, thereby ensuring the reserved seats provision. Article 83 on the "Wolesi Jirga and women's participation" was amended to read

that “at least two female delegates should be elected from each province” (rather than one in the original wording).

UNAMA ( the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) has also contributed to the democratization process of Afghanistan. In addition to peace-building tasks, one of the most important missions of UNAMA was securing women’s political representation. UNAMA, working closely with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, organized one national and seven regional workshops in order to prepare selected Afghan women for the next elections. One of the major aims of the workshops was to strengthen the skills of the Afghan Women’s Network in communications, lobbying, advocacy and networking ; this would then enable the participants to later set up similar networks in their own regions ([www.unama-afg.org](http://www.unama-afg.org)).

The Afghan women’s organizations did not make explicit demands for the inclusion of gender quotas in the constitution, but they have demanded equal representation in the Loya Jirga with the help and guidance of UN agencies in Afghanistan. The women’s organizations worked for gender equality and put forward a ‘general’ quota demand -- there was no specific mention of the word “quotas” ([www.afghanwomensnetwork.org](http://www.afghanwomensnetwork.org)). These demands were strongly supported by UN agencies ([www.unama-afg.org](http://www.unama-afg.org); [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org); [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)) as a manifestation of top-down efforts (pressure from above) in the adoption of gender quotas as reserved seats in Afghanistan.

As a result of all these efforts, in the 2005 election, 68 women were elected to the 249 seat lower house – Wolesi Jirga (27.3%) and 23 women were elected to the 102 seat upper house – the Meshrano Jirga (22.5%). The gender quota system accepted by the Constitution was thus realised. [According to the Constitution, from each of the 34 provinces an average of at least two female candidates should become a member of the Wolesi Jirga, which at a minimum should guarantee 27% women in the assembly (68 seats)]. For the House of Elders, the Meshrano Jirga, the President appoints 1/3 of the members, and 50% of these should be women. Also, a minimum of 17% of the seats of the Meshrano Jirga must therefore be occupied by women. According to the 2004 Election Law, seats for women are allocated based on whichever candidate wins the most votes ( [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)).

## **International organizations in the adoption of gender quotas in Iraq**

Iraq is taken as another case study of a post-conflict country that has adopted a large quota for women.. The United States “war on terror” initiated in 2001 and the subsequent military invasion of Iraq in 2003 has prompted new discourses on state-building interventions and the role of international community (Ballington & Dahlerup 2006). The Bush Administration declared women’s rights as a central component of its policy to promote democracy in the Middle East, and is one of the four pillars of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (Ottoway 2004). Unlike in Afghanistan, it is not the UN, but the Coalition Provisional Authority that has been in charge of the restructuring of Iraq. So, the direct impact of an international organization is not witnessed in the adoption of gender quotas in case of Iraq.

In post-Saddam era, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), headed by Ambassador Paul Bremer was established by the US-led coalition in May 2003 to administer Iraq. In contrast to developments in Afghanistan, the UN did not take place in the state-building process of Iraq. The administrative twenty-five member Interim Iraqi Government Council (IGC) was established in July 2003. Only three women were appointed to this council by the CPA. It should be mentioned that only one woman was appointed as minister out of a total of twenty-five ministers. The CPA was divided on the issue of quotas for women; while the British government had proposed a 25% mandatory quota for women in the parliament, the Iraqi politicians and the US government were not in favor. The IGC did not appoint any women to the Fundamental Law Committee which was responsible for drafting the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). Although there was no electoral gender quota provision in TAL, it stated that:

*“The National Assembly shall be elected in accordance with an electoral law and political party law. The electoral law shall aim to achieve the goal of having women constitute no less than one-quarter of the members of the National Assembly and of having fair representation for all communities in Iraq...”*

In Iraq, the new constitution was adopted in 2005 and formalized the 25 per cent target that had been implemented for elections to the Transitional National Assembly. To achieve this goal, the electoral law, which was passed later that year, stated that each party list must consist one-third female candidates. The process of constitutional design drew on advice from many international experts, including agencies such as IFES, NED and USAID (Norris 2007).

In contrast to the situation in Afghanistan, Iraqi women were highly mobilized for guaranteed representation in both the transition government and the new constitution. In procuring legislative quotas in Iraq, mobilization was from below, with strong support from Iraqi women’s movement, in sharp contrast to Afghanistan where the adoption of gender quotas for reserved seats took place by pressure from above. In the struggle for the adoption of gender quotas in Iraq, the three women appeared as leaders of the campaign for the adoption of gender quotas in Iraq. Initially nominated to the IGC, they actively campaigned for women’s political representation. Their experience serving as public figures and their strong educational background helped them in their endeavors: Aquila al-Hashimi was a former diplomat, Raja Habib al-Khuzai was a British educated southern tribal leader and Sondul Chapouk was a women’s activist, engineer and teacher.

Prior to the acceptance of the constitution, Iraqi women mobilized strongly through a series of meetings, conferences and workshops, with considerable debate around what level of quota should be adopted (Norris 2007). In January 2004, women in Hilla, Divsania, Karbala and Najaf organized a major conference in Basra, attended by 400 delegates including a petition campaign to collect signatures supporting women’s demands for political representation; the Iraqi Higher Women’s Council presented Ambassador Bremer with a letter supporting a forty per cent quota for women in legislative bodies (ibid). The US government (the US agency for International Development) strongly supported the Iraqi women’s movement; the CPA sponsored the Basra Women’s Conference.

Iraqi women's organizations were run mainly by elite women, but some of these organizations established broad-based membership and branches across the country. A lot of women activists lobbied members of the IGC and encouraged Salama al-Khufaji, the female representative who replaced Aquila al-Hashimi after her assassination, to press for the implementation of affirmative action to assist women.

As a result of all these endeavors, Iraq has adopted a candidate-list based quota. However, by stipulating the rank order of where women should be on the list, Iraq has succeeded in implementing a gender quota that not only integrates women into the political party system, but also puts them on equal positions within party lists, rather than at the bottom of lists.

In the Council of Representatives (Majlis an-Nuwwab al-Iraqi) 275 members are elected by party-list system with proportional distribution of seats to serve for four year terms. In the 2005 election, there were 70 women elected to the 275 seat parliament. So women constituted 25.5 per cent of the members of the Iraqi parliament ([www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)). The goal of having women constitute no less than one quarter (25%) of the members of the parliament in the constitution was thus realised. The Electoral Law stating that "no fewer than one out of the first three candidates on the list must be a woman and no fewer than two out of the first six candidates on the list must be a woman and so forth until the end of the list" is another factor in realising this target. As a result of the election, Iraq ranked 26th worldwide in the proportion of women in the new parliament, comparable to Switzerland, Australia and Mexico, and well above the UK and the US (Norris 2007).

## Conclusion

International organizations play an important role in the adoption of gender quotas worldwide in two important dimensions. First dimension covers the evolution of norms concerning gender equality and affirmative action strategies like gender quotas into a global regime created by international organizations like the United Nations. Second dimension is the *direct* influence/pressure exerted by the international organizations, both in the form of IOs and INGOs, in the adoption of gender quotas as a fast track policy, especially in post-conflict societies like Afghanistan and Iraq.

In Afghanistan, international actors played a central role in realising the adoption of gender quotas as reserved seats. In Iraq, on the other hand, Iraqi women's organizations were strong advocates of gender quotas but support of the international organizations as catalysts was crucial for Iraqi women's movement in achieving their goal of guaranteeing women's political participation. The case studies of Afghanistan and Iraq, reflect a clear picture of the strong role played by international organizations in the adoption of gender quotas through interaction with local actors. Both cases support the view that without the help and guidance of international organizations like United Nations, the adoption of gender quotas in post-conflict societies as a fast track to political representation of women would have been almost impossible.

## References

- Alvarez, S. 1999. "Advocating Feminism: The Latin American Feminist NGO Boom", *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1 (2): 181-209.
- Ballington, J. And Dahlerup, D. 2006. "Gender Quotas in Post-Conflict States: East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq" in Dahlerup, D. (ed.) *Women, Quotas and Politics*, pp. 249-58. New York: Routledge.
- Bauer, A. 2002. *Afghan Women and the Democratic Reconstruction of Afghanistan: Findings and Interviews from a Journalist's Field Trip*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.
- Clark, A. M., E. J. Friedman and K. Hochstetler. 1998. "The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society: A Comparison of NGO Participation in UN World Conferences on the Environment, Human Rights and Women", *World Politics* 51(1): 1-35.
- Dahlerup, D., and L. Freidenwall. 2005. "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia is No Longer the Model." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. 7 (1): 26-48.
- Dahlerup, D., and A. T. Nordlund. 2004. "Gender Quotas: A Key to Equality? A Case Study of Iraq and Afghanistan." *European Political Science* 3 (3): 91-98.
- Finnemore, M. and K. Sikkink. 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organization* 52 (4): 887-917.
- Goertz, G. and P. F. Diehl. 1992. "Toward a Theory of International Norms." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (4): 634-664.
- Kandiyoti, D. 2005. "The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan" Occasional Paper, no. 4, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Kardam, N. 2004. "The Emerging Global Gender Equality Regime from Neoliberal and Constructivist Perspectives in International Relations." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6 (1): 85-109.
- Krasner, S. (ed.). 1983. *International Regimes*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Krook, M. L. 2006. "Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide." *Politics & Gender* 2 (3): 303-27.
- Krook, M.L. and J. True. 2008. "Global Strategies for Gender Equality: The United Nations Before and After Beijing", Paper Presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, San Fransisco, CA.

Krook, M. L. 2009. *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Krook, M. L., and D. Z. O'Brian, K. M. Swip. 2010. "Military Invasion and Women's Political Representation ." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 12 (1): 66-79.

Meyer, M. K. and E. Prügl (eds.). 1999. *Gender Politics in Global Governance*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Norris, P. 2007. "Opening the Door: Women Leaders and Constitution Building in Iraq and Afghanistan", in Kellerman, B. (ed.) *Women Who Lead*, pp. 197-226. New York: Jossey Bass.

Ottoway, M. 2004. "Women's Rights and Democracy in the Arab World", Carnegie Papers no. 42, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

West, L. 1999. "The United Nations Women's Conferences and Feminist Politics", in M. K. Meyer and E. Prügl (eds) *Gender Politics and Global Governance*, pp.177-96. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Young, O. 1989. "The Politics of International Regime Formation", *International Organization* 43: 349-37.

<http://www.ipu.org>

<http://www.socialistinternational.org>

<http://www.socintwomen.org>

<http://assembly.coe.int>

<http://www.eurit.it>

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

<http://osce.org>

<http://www.african-union.org>

<http://www.oas.org>

<http://summit-americas.org>

<http://www.quotaproject.com>

<http://www.afghanwomensnetwork.org>

<http://www.unama-afg.org>

<http://www.unifem.org>

<http://www.undp.org>



