

9 The women's movement, gender equality agencies and central-state debates on political representation in Spain

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Introduction

This chapter examines the role of the Women's Institute (*Instituto de la Mujer*, WI) and the women's secretariat of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, PSOE) – hereafter 'PSOE women's secretariat' – in three central-state debates on political representation in Spain since 1983. The WI is the main central-state level women's policy office in Spain.¹ As the analysis in this chapter demonstrates, the WI and the PSOE women's secretariat were able to represent women's movement goals and gender the frame of two debates on political representation: the discussion that in 1988 led to the adoption by the PSOE of a 25 per cent women's quota, and in 1997 resulted in the increase of this quota to 40 per cent. In the third discussion (on a mandatory 40 per cent women's quota for all parties submitted by the PSOE in 2001), an energetic PSOE women's secretariat was unable to counteract the WI, whose activities were not feminist. Women were allowed to participate in the policy process but the policy outcome (the rejection of the bill in 2003) was contrary to the demand advanced by the women's movement.

The women-friendly outcomes of the first two debates occurred under governments formed by the PSOE. The women's movement was at a stage of consolidation and the active WI and PSOE women's secretariat were attentive to the development of measures to increase women's political representation. This success of the women's movement was facilitated by the presence of a left-wing party in office. Change of government to the Conservative People's Party (*Partido Popular*, PP) was the reason for the unfavourable outcome of the third debate.

In other countries, the issue of political representation of specific groups of society is discussed in terms not only of gender but also of ethnicity. Not so in post-authoritarian Spain, where the topic has been

¹ For research on the WI, see Threlfall (1996, 1998) and Valiente (1995, 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2004).

debated mainly in terms of women's presence in representative institutions. Therefore, in general, debates on gender and political representation are the Spanish discussions on political representation.

Generally speaking, since the 1980s Spanish public debates on women's political representation have four characteristics. First, deliberations are chiefly on women's quotas in political parties. Parties are the main actors in the Spanish political system, and the second wave of the feminist movement includes significant proportions of women who belonged to both women's groups and left-wing parties. The main left-wing parties and coalitions have women's quotas. An example is the electoral coalition United Left (*Izquierda Unida*, IU), which was created in 1986 by the association of the Communist Party and other parties to the left of the PSOE. The debate on women's political representation developed principally (although not exclusively) on the left of the political spectrum. By contrast the conservative PP remained strongly against quotas. The PP participated actively in the discussion on quotas only after the late 1990s when it responded to mobilisation by women on the political left in favour of mandatory quotas for all parties.

Second, generally constitutional issues and women's political representation were discussed jointly only from the late 1990s. At that time opponents to mandatory quotas declared them to be unconstitutional. Previously constitutional matters were not a central topic in public discussions of political representation. Comparatively speaking, Spain was a young democracy formed after the death of Franco in 1975. Most policy actors were reluctant to reform the 1978 constitution because it was a product of negotiation and compromise reached with difficulty by the main parties during the transition to democracy. The existence of *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) terrorism make changes in the constitution unlikely until the Basque conflict is settled, because the independence of the Basque country (the terrorists' goal) implies a constitutional reform. Thus there was a reluctance to 'constitutionalise' issues of political representation.

Third, the discussions on political representation are conducted mainly (but not exclusively) at the central-state level. The main left-wing parties and coalitions that have women's quotas (the PSOE and the IU) are central-state-based political organisations. The bill to impose a 40 per cent women's quota on all parties was submitted in November 2001 by the PSOE to the central-state legislature. However, in the twenty-first century deliberations on women's representation gained importance at the regional level. In 2003, two regions governed by the PSOE (alone or in coalition), the Balearic Islands and Castile-La Mancha, were in the process of establishing mandatory quotas of 50 per cent of women and

men in alternative positions (the so-called zipper lists) for all parties for their regional elections.

Finally, debates on political representation often contained references to international events. Examples include initiatives to increase the presence of women in institutions taken successfully in other countries such as the Nordic states, measures that failed because these were declared unconstitutional, such as in France in the early 1980s and Italy in 1993, and strategies promoted by supra-national organisations and institutions, such as the United Nations or the European Union.

Selection of debates

Institutions that make representation policy

The political representation of citizens at the central-state level is regulated in general terms by the constitution and in detail by the 1985 General Electoral Act of 19 June (*Ley Orgánica 5/1985, de 19 de junio, del Régimen Electoral General*, hereafter '1985 General Electoral Act'). Acts are made and amended in the legislature.² Political parties, through formal and informal rules, recruit candidates to represent citizens in political institutions. In short, the legislature and the political parties make representation policy in Spain.

Universe of policy debates

The WI was created in 1983. Hence there was no possibility of women's policy agency intervention in debates before that date. The PSOE was in power between 1982 and 1996 and after spring 2004. It was the main opposition party between 1996 and spring 2004. Three party discussions on women's representation resulted in action to increase women's political representation. These were the approval of a 25 per cent women's quota for internal party positions and on party electoral lists in January 1988, the endorsement of a new 40 per cent quota in June 1997, and the submission to the legislature of a bill to reform the 1985 General Electoral Act, making a women's quota of 40 per cent mandatory for all parties in November 2001.

The IU has usually been the third largest nationwide political party in national elections. In the late 1980s, an internal party debate on women's

² The legislature is composed of two chambers: a lower chamber called the Congress of Deputies, and an upper chamber called the Senate. Members of the Congress of Deputies are elected by proportional representation under the D'Hondt system with closed and blocked lists. The vast majority of senators are elected by a majority system.

political presence finished with the 1989 commitment to a women's quota of 30 per cent for internal party positions and on party electoral lists. Two other IU discussions culminated in the adoption of new women's quotas of 35 per cent and 40 per cent in 1990 and 1997 respectively (Ramiro 2000: 225–6).

At regional level, a debate on women's political representation preceded the June 2002 Act requiring the alternation of men and women on the lists of all political parties competing in regional elections in the Balearic Islands (*El País*, 18 June 2002: 21). A similar measure was adopted in the region of Castile-La Mancha (Act 11/2002 of 27 June on the reform of Electoral Act of Castile-La Mancha 5/1986 of 23 December). The government then lodged an appeal to the Constitutional Court on the grounds that the two acts were unconstitutional.³ On 15 October 2002, the court decided to deal with the appeal (*El País*, 18 October 2002: 23). Implementation of the policy was suspended until the court pronounced its sentence.

Selection of debates

The three debates chosen for close investigation in this chapter resulted in the approval of a 25 per cent women's quota by the PSOE in 1988 (the first debate), the establishment of a 40 per cent women's quota by the PSOE in June 1997 (the second debate), and the rejection in 2003 of the PSOE bill to endorse a 40 per cent women's quota mandatory to all parties submitted to the legislature in November 2001 (the third debate). The three debates fulfil the RNGS model criteria of decisional system importance, life cycle and issue area salience. Regarding *decisional system importance*, the three discussions developed within a political party (the PSOE) but the final part of the third debate took place in the legislature. The three debates took place at the central-state level. The above-mentioned regional debates could not be analysed in this chapter because they were still taking place when the research was completed. All of the debates had extensive *life cycles* – the topic of citizens' representation has been more or less continuously discussed since 1983. Between them the debates covered the whole life cycle so far of political discussion of this issue: the first took place in the 1980s, the second in the 1990s, and the third from the 1990s on. In terms of *issue area salience*, the three

³ The Constitutional Court is the supreme interpreter of constitutionality, and can rule that laws are unconstitutional and invalid. It reviews laws made by the Spanish legislature, the national executive and regional governments, and its decisions apply to the whole territory of Spain and cannot be appealed (Heywood 1995: 105–6).

debates refer to all the arguments on political representation advanced by major policy actors in Spain.⁴

Debate 1: Endorsement of a 25 per cent women's quota in the socialist party, 1987–1988

How the debate came to the public agenda

In the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, feminists within the PSOE continuously denounced the low presence of women in top political decision-making positions. In the 1977, 1979, 1982 and 1986 general elections, the percentage of women members of the Congress of Deputies was 6 per cent. Women's political representation in the PSOE did not increase; its proportions of women deputies were 9, 5, 9 and 7 per cent in successive elections (Instituto de la Mujer 1994: 79–80). But as a result of feminist pressure, the thirty-first PSOE federal congress in January 1988 discussed a proposal to institute a 25 per cent women's quota for internal party positions and on electoral lists (Partido Socialista Obrero Español-Secretaría de Participación de la Mujer 1988: 1).

Dominant frame of debate

The debate focused on questions about the low presence of women in Spanish politics. Was it a serious problem that in the first decade of Spanish democracy the presence of women in political decision-making positions was very low? If so, what were the causes of this problem? Could this problem be solved? If so, what would be the potential solutions? Is it fair to reserve a proportion of political positions to any particular sector of the population (women)?

Gendering the debate

The debate was gendered at the outset, because both supporters and (to a lesser extent) opponents of the quota made explicit references to women and men. Some opponents attacked quotas by using the classic anti-feminist argument of the left: that feminist demands were particularistic and bourgeois deviations from the main objective of a socialist party (the improvement of the status of the working classes) (Bustelo 1979: 13;

⁴ The sources for this chapter mainly consist of published documents from the WI, the women's movement and the PSOE; secondary analysis; and press articles from *El País* (the main newspaper of general information with nationwide coverage).

Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1988a: 114). Other opponents were more conciliatory. They agreed that the low presence of women in top positions in the party and the state was a problem, but argued that its cause was a matter of supply, that there was a shortage of women with enough qualifications and ambition to hold decision-making positions. A quota would not solve this scarcity of potential female candidates (Threlfall 2001: 4). Actually, women were in short supply in the party as a whole; they were about 15 per cent of members (Gallego 1994: 670).

PSOE feminists used several arguments to defend the quota. They countered that women were absent from the hierarchy of the party and the state because they were discriminated against in subtle and not so subtle ways, and not because there was an insufficient supply of potential female candidates (Threlfall 2001: 4). Advocates argued that in the absence of quotas men would never voluntarily release power, since many party men seek power for its own sake, while numerous women want power to improve society and help others. PSOE feminists time and again pointed out that, historically, left-wing parties have not supported (and have often even opposed) feminist causes. However, PSOE feminists believed and hoped that left-wing parties would have the potential to be women-friendly because of their general commitment to equality (Bustelo 1979: 14; 1980: 8–9; Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1988b: 26–9). They reminded their opponents that the Socialist International recommendation on the measures to increase women's presence in political decision-making positions should be adopted by member parties (Threlfall 2001: 5). Finally, pragmatic arguments were made. Quotas are gender-equality measures that would help the PSOE win a higher share of the women's vote in subsequent elections by presenting a more feminised image and attracting more women's votes (Bustelo 1979: 14).

Policy outcome

At the thirty-first PSOE federal congress (22–24 January 1988), delegates passed the 25 per cent women's quota for party positions and electoral lists (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1988c: 84). Thereafter, the proportion of female PSOE MPs rose steadily, to reach the level of 28 per cent of PSOE deputies and 23 per cent of PSOE senators in the 1996 election (Instituto de la Mujer 1994: 80–2; 1997a: 98–9).

Women's movement impact

The Spanish women's movement is composed of two branches: the feminist branch and the non-feminist branch. Individuals and

organisations that consider themselves feminist comprised the feminist branch of the women's movement (hereafter 'the feminist movement'). It has been amply researched, so this chapter refers mainly to this branch. The non-feminist branch of the women's movement consists of housewives' associations, cultural and religious groups, widows' organisations, mothers' groups and the like. Hardly any research has been conducted on these organisations.

During the transition to democracy, the problem of the relationship between feminism and mainstream politics was raised in most feminist gatherings. Some feminists thought that an important level of formal and real equality could be attained through state action. It was thus important that women were present in political decision-making arenas. Other feminists rejected mainstream politics altogether, because they saw the state as a site that actively contributed to the perpetuation of unequal gender relations. At the end of the 1970s, the feminist movement was bitterly split between supporters of both positions. However, this division eroded slightly during the 1980s and more in the 1990s, mainly for three reasons. First, the 1982 PSOE electoral victory meant that for the first time since the 1930s a socialist party governed Spain. Some feminists thought that this would be a unique opportunity to improve women's rights and status. Second, the WI policy of subsidising the women's movement meant that groups that did not want to relate to the state would have considerably fewer resources than groups that dealt with the state and received money from it. Third, the increasing energy put by many feminist groups into the delivery of services to the female population focused the attention of feminists on the details of the management of services and away from general and theoretical discussions on the state (Durán and Gallego 1986: 208-12; Gallego 1994: 671; Scanlon 1990: 95-8).

Party developments

In the PSOE, the main advocates of measures to improve women's political representation (including quotas) were feminist activists and leaders, many of whom belonged (or had belonged) both to the party and to feminist associations in civil society. The PSOE accepted women (PSOE feminists) representing gender interests in the process. By adopting the 1988 quota of 25 per cent, the PSOE answered one of the demands of the sector of the feminist movement pursuing higher levels of women's political representation. Thus, the PSOE's reaction to (a sector of) the feminist movement was a *dual response*.

Women's policy agency activities and characteristics

WI was officially created in 1983 (Act 16 of 24 October). The scope of WI is very broad. It has five comprehensive goals: to promote policy initiatives for women through formal enactment of policy statements; to study all aspects of women's situation in Spain; to oversee the implementation of women's policy; to receive and handle women's discrimination complaints; and to increase women's knowledge of their rights. The WI is a permanent bureaucratic agency. Until 1988 the WI was a part of the Ministry of Culture, one of the least important in the Spanish state. Located within a ministry rather than having a cabinet position, the WI is distant from major power centres. In the mid-1980s, the WI did not yet have an extensive staff and budget, but was in the process of gaining them. Between 1983 and 1988 the director was Carlota Bustelo, a well-known feminist activist who had been a member of the Women's Liberation Front (*Frente de Liberación de la Mujer*, FLM). The FLM foundational document demanded amongst other things 'the incorporation of women into all social, productive, *political* and creative tasks' (emphasis added; translation by Celia Valiente - Seminario de Estudios Sociológicos sobre la Mujer 1986: 36-7). Carlota Bustelo was also a PSOE deputy during the first legislative term (1977-9). In protest at what she considered to be an insignificant and unacceptable proportion of female PSOE MPs, she refused to continue as an MP into the second legislative term (1979-82) (Threlfall 1996: 120). Women's political representation was one of the high priorities of the WI in the mid- and late 1980s.⁵

Some members of the WI were able to push demands for women's political representation into the PSOE debate on quotas in the 1980s because they belonged (or had belonged) to the party, the WI, and/or the feminist movement. The case of Carlota Bustelo was not unique. For instance, Matilde Fernández, elected as a member of the PSOE executive committee in charge of the Women's Secretariat in 1984 (Threlfall 1998: 85) and latterly Minister of Social Affairs (1988-93), belonged to the WI's advisory council.⁶ In this way, members of the WI played the role of an *insider* in the 1988 PSOE debate on quotas.

⁵ This high priority is reflected, for instance, in the special attention paid to the topic by the WI's journal titled *Women (Mujeres)*. Pages on the matter can be consulted in: 1984, No. 2: 42; No. 4: 6-13, 18-25, 28-30, 49-56, 84-5, 95-7; 1986, No. 12: 3, 6-23, 28-34. Since 1985, the WI director has been aided by the advisory council (*Consejo rector*), which is primarily composed of representatives from the major ministries and (up to the 1990s) six people who had demonstrated a long commitment to gender equality (Matilde Fernández among them).

The PSOE women's secretariat was also an *insider* in the 1988 debate on women's quotas, since it incorporated the goal of the part of the movement interested in mainstream politics into its own positions (a higher women's presence in politics achieved through quotas) and inserted these gendered policy demands into the dominant frame of the debate on the PSOE quota. That the demands of PSOE feminists could be heard was partly because they previously gained organisational status within the party. In 1976, a women's caucus, Woman and Socialism (*Mujer y Socialismo*), was formed in the PSOE and in 1981, a member of the caucus was elected to the PSOE's executive committee, with others following her in successive years. Carlota Bustelo (first WI director, 1983–8) was the main advocate of the foundation of Woman and Socialism. In December 1984, party leaders decided to institutionalise the women's caucus at the federal executive level, whereupon it became the women's secretariat. The feminists in the secretariat successfully added clauses involving women's issues to PSOE congress resolutions, electoral programmes, and other documents. The PSOE women's secretariat has a broad and cross-sectoral mandate, since it is in charge of gender equality within the party. It is a permanent bureaucratic agency of the party. It is part of the Federal Executive Committee; therefore it is close to the major power centres. It has a medium institutional capacity (staff and budget), and has generally been headed by feminists. Women's political representation was one of the highest priorities of the PSOE women's secretariat from the 1980s (Durán and Gallego 1986: 213; Folguera 1988: 124–5; Threlfall 1985: 48–9; 1998: 82–3).

Women's movement characteristics

After emerging in the 1960s and early 1970s, and growing from 1975 to the early 1980s, the feminist movement was in a stage of consolidation by the mid- to late 1980s. The Spanish feminist movement, while not negligible, has been historically weak, its activities involving only a minority of women. The movement occasionally showed some signs of strength, however. For example, it organised national feminist conferences regularly attended by between 3,000 and 5,000 women. In comparison with other western countries, the feminist movement in Spain does not have high visibility in the mass media. In the 1980s, most of the feminist groups were very close to the left. Political representation was a priority for one of the sectors of the feminist movement that believed that state policy could improve the status of women, but it was not a unifying issue for the movement as a whole. The part of the movement interested

in political representation was cohesive. Movement organisations active on the issue agreed on the frame and proposals, although each group tended to pressurise the political party to which it was closest. Left-wing political parties were thus a privileged location for feminist advocates of political representation. Conservative politicians openly opposed women's quotas. They provided arguments against quotas in the general discussion on the issue, but could not directly intervene in the debate within the PSOE. Thus the strength of the counter-movement to women's quotas may be characterised as moderate.

Policy environment

Since the 25 per cent quota was an internal PSOE rule, the policy environment of this measure was not only the state but also the PSOE. The structure of this policy sub-system was moderately closed to feminist demands. PSOE feminists could take part in the decision-making process at federal congresses because some of them already belonged to the party hierarchy, and they and others successfully pressurised highly ranked PSOE officials. In contrast, members of the feminist movement interested in political representation but not belonging to the PSOE could not participate in PSOE federal congresses. The policy frame that initially shaped the debate at the thirty-first federal congress was compatible with the frame in which movement goals were expressed by activists because both frames referred to the same issues (although in different ways). In the late 1980s, the PSOE controlled the executive and had an absolute majority in both chambers in the legislature.

Debate 2: Endorsement of a 40 per cent women's quota in the socialist party, 1992–1997

How the debate came to the public agenda

The concept of 'parity democracy' was introduced at the European Summit of Women in Power held in Athens in 1992. PSOE feminists took up the parity democracy issue, generated a continuous debate in the party and pressurised the party hierarchy to increase the 25 per cent quota to 40 per cent.

Dominant frame of debate

The discussion of parity democracy in the PSOE in the 1990s addressed and extended the questions already raised in the first debate. There was

discussion about whether it was the right moment to increase the women's quota, and whether the party might better concentrate on the resolution of more pressing problems.

Gendering the debate

As in the case of the previous debate, participants in this debate raised explicitly gendered questions, although defenders of the 40 per cent women's quota did so more often than opponents. Supporters of the new quota argued that left-wing parties need quotas because of their differences from right-wing parties. The parties of the right, it was argued, maintain a 'social Darwinist' ideology that resists special measures to ensure women's representation. These parties believe that only the most qualified and capable individuals within parties reach power positions. Nothing prevents women from competing in that race. When party women are good enough, they will reach top positions. If fewer women than men are present in the upper ranks of parties and state, then this difference is a result simply of women's inadequate performance in the competition. Left-wing parties are ill disposed to such theses, because these parties are (or should be) more sensitive and critical to pre-existing inequalities that impede some groups (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1988b: 26–9; 1997: 207).

Policy outcome

As a result of sustained PSOE feminist pressure, delegates at the thirty-fourth PSOE federal congress (20–22 June 1997) discussed and approved the increase of the internal and electoral women's party quota to 40 per cent (Partido Socialista Obrero Español 1997: 207). Subsequently, the proportion of women who became PSOE deputies increased from 28 per cent in 1996 to 37 per cent in 2000 and to 46 per cent in 2004. The percentage of women among PSOE senators decreased from 23 per cent to 17 per cent between 1996 and 2000 and increased to 27 per cent in 2004 (Instituto de la Mujer 1997a: 98–9; 2002; 2004).

Women's movement impact

The sector of the Spanish feminist movement pursuing parity democracy in the 1990s and the twenty-first century (hereafter 'the Spanish parity movement') consists of feminist leaders and activists in political parties and in women's organisations, primarily from the left. It includes feminists from the PSOE and the IU. In terms of feminist associations,

the parity movement grew out of well-known women's groups mainly linked to political parties, including (among others) the Federation of Progressive Women (*Federación de Mujeres Progresistas*), close to the PSOE, and the Dolores Ibárruri Foundation (*Fundación Dolores Ibárruri*), close to the IU. Other less well-known feminist organisations, such as the Forum of Feminist Politics (*Forum de Política Feminista*), are also mobilised in favour of parity democracy.⁷

Spanish parity feminists pressurised the hierarchy of left-wing parties to increase the already existing women's quotas. The 1997 PSOE move to increase its quota to 40 per cent coincided with the goals of the sector of the feminist movement active on the issue of political representation. Within the PSOE, feminists were consistently among the main participants in the internal deliberation on the new quota. Thus, the PSOE's reaction to the women's movement was a *dual response*.

Women's policy agency activities and characteristics

This second debate ran across two very different political periods: between 1992 and spring 1996 (socialist rule); and between spring 1996 and June 1997 (conservative rule). During both periods the WI was a cross-sectional permanent bureaucratic part of the state with a broad policy mandate, and was distant from major power centres (between 1988 and 1996 the WI depended on the Ministry of Social Affairs, and after 1996 on the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). In the 1990s, the WI's administrative capacity was high as it boasted an extensive staff and budget. Between 1991 and 1993, the WI director was a feminist lawyer, Purificación Gutiérrez, and between 1993 and 1996, a feminist sociology professor, Marina Subirats (Threlfall 1998: 86). In the 1990s (until 1996), political representation was one of the top priorities of the WI.⁸

Until the 1996 PSOE electoral defeat, the WI incorporated the women's movement goal of parity democracy into its own positions, leading many activities on the matter domestically and abroad. WI officials advanced the aim of the 40 per cent quota within the socialist party because some of them also belonged to the PSOE and even to the party hierarchy. Others were very close to the PSOE: WI directors Carmen Martínez-Ten (1988–91) and Purificación Gutiérrez, and Ministers of

⁷ For more on the Spanish parity movement in comparison with that of France, see Jensen and Valiente (2003).

⁸ Many sources document this priority status in the 1990s. Most issues of the WI periodical journal *Women (Mujeres)* contain pages on the topic: 1990, No. 2: 27, 33; 1992, No. 9: 14, 26–30; 1993, No. 10: 28–9; 1993, No. 12: 24–5; 1994, No. 13: 22–6; 1995, No. 18: 16; 1996, No. 21: 6–8.

Social Affairs Matilde Fernández (1988–93) and Cristina Alberdi (1993–6), among others. Thus, the activities of some WI members (until spring 1996) could be characterised as those of an *insider*.

In spring 1996, the conservative PP came to power. While the institutional characteristics of the WI remained the same as during the period between 1992 and 1996, the leadership and the priority given to political representation both changed. In 1996, the PP appointed Concepción Dancausa as WI director. She was a civil servant with no ties with the feminist movement and apparently with no previous significant experience in the policy area of women's rights (*Mujeres* 1996, No. 22: 5). Political representation was a topic of very low priority for the WI during the years of conservative rule. The main WI policy document of the late 1990s was the Third Gender Equality Plan (Instituto de la Mujer 1997b), which ran from 1997 to 2000. It is divided into ten sections. The shortest sections are on 'power and decision-making' and 'environment' (three pages each). The devices contained in the Third Gender Equality Plan to foster participation of women in decision-making were 'soft measures', such as the promotion of research, the improvement of statistics, and support for training programmes for potential female decision-makers. The Third Gender Equality Plan did not establish numerical targets of political representation. After the 1996 PP electoral victory, the WI did not participate in the internal PSOE debate on political representation. It was neither an advocate for movement goals (quotas) in the PSOE decision-making process, nor did it gender PSOE policy definitions on the issue. Between spring 1996 and the 1997 PSOE federal congress, the WI activities regarding the PSOE debate were therefore *symbolic*.

As was the case in the first debate, during the whole debate on the PSOE 40 per cent women's quota, the PSOE women's secretariat continued to be a cross-sectional bureaucratic agency of the party with a broad mandate. It was close to the major power centres, it had a medium institutional capacity, and it was headed by feminist leaders very interested in parity democracy and very active in the PSOE debate on the 40 per cent women's quota (Threlfall 1998, 2001). Then, the PSOE women's secretariat played the role of an *insider* in this debate.

Women's movement characteristics

Most feminist movement characteristics were unchanged from the first debate. The feminist movement was in a stage of consolidation, and was very close to the left. Political representation was an issue of high priority for an important sector of the feminist movement, which was cohesive on the matter, and faced a moderate counter-movement contrary to quotas

from the PP and women's groups close to the conservative party, such as Women for Democracy (*Mujeres para la democracia*). As shown above, in the second debate, feminist activism in support of quotas was located not only in left-wing political parties (as in the first debate), but also (although to a lesser extent than in parties) in women's groups to some degree autonomous from political parties.

Policy environment

The structure of the policy environment where the PSOE 40 per cent women's quota was approved in June 1997 was moderately closed for the sector of the feminist movement interested in political representation. Members of this sector who did not belong to the socialist party could not participate directly in the internal party debate, but PSOE feminists could take part in the discussion and played a major role in it. Joaquín Almunia, the PSOE leader who prepared the political document on the model of the party to be discussed and voted on at the thirty-fourth congress (and who became PSOE general secretary in that very congress), was in general moderately favourable to feminist causes. The frame that shaped the debate on the proposal of the 40 per cent women's quota was expressed in terms that were compatible with movement goals as expressed by activists. The 1993–6 PSOE government was a minority government supported in the legislature by the regionalist Catalan coalition, Convergència and Union (*Convergència i Unió*, CiU). Between the elections of spring 1996 and spring 2000, the PP formed a minority government supported by three regional parties or coalitions of parties, CiU, the Canary Coalition (*Coalición Canaria*, CC) and the Basque Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, PNV). However, the PNV withdrew its support for the government around the middle of the legislative term.

Debate 3: The 2001 socialist bill on mandatory quotas for all parties, 1998–2003

How the debate came to the public agenda

In August 1998, the PSOE announced that it would submit a bill to reform the 1985 General Electoral Act in order to require all electoral lists to limit their candidates of the same sex to no more than 60 per cent. In other words, the bill would, if approved, mandate 40 per cent minima of each sex for all political parties. The IU supported the idea, but the governing PP strongly opposed it (*El País*, 31 August 1998: 18).

Dominant frame of debate

The same issues discussed in the first two debates were prominent in the third debate. However, in addition, constitutional matters were present in this discussion, because opponents to mandatory quotas agreed that mandatory quotas were unconstitutional. The right of a party to impose any rule of candidate selection on other parties was also debated.

Gendering the debate

Supporters of mandatory quotas were situated on the left of the political spectrum and tended to use gendered arguments. They argued that a democracy of high quality is one in which half of the population (women) is politically represented by significant proportions of women. Some documents in favour of mandatory quotas presented gender parity as an end in itself, as a matter of justice (see for instance Alberdi 1998; Chicano 1999; Ruiz-Tagle 1999). While they were fighting for the right of women to be elected, PSOE parity activists represented themselves as followers of the first suffragists who fought for the right of women to vote. In the same documents gender parity was also claimed on the basis that female activists maintained a broader social and feminist agenda. Advocates claimed that if women and men were equally represented in the political arena, policy outcomes would be different and more positive. Policy outcomes would better meet the particular needs of women. Policies would be elaborated in a more consensual way. Public measures would include the interests not only of women but also of other, less privileged groups. Moreover, the distinction between the private and the public was averred to be fictitious since the personal is political. Responsibilities should then be shared: political decision-making should not be the monopoly of men, as family and caring responsibilities should not be the monopoly of women. Care services in the welfare state had to be developed, to help women and men combine their professional and family responsibilities.

The most vocal opponents of quotas were conservatives. They were less likely to use gender notions than were supporters of mandatory quotas. In common with conservative policy actors in other countries, the PP and women's associations close to it thought it was wrong to intervene in the recruitment process in order to elect more women. The process had to be 'fair' and 'neutral', so that the 'best people' (including women) could be elected. Some conservative leaders and activists accepted 'soft' measures (such as encouraging women to stand for office) but opposed 'hard' ones (quotas). PP politicians termed quotas a form of discrimination (*ABC*, 27 January 2002: 28). Others claimed that only the

PP gave women real opportunities to gain the centres of power, in contrast to the artificial quotas of the PSOE. They used as evidence the increase in the numbers of PP women in elected office after the party won the general elections of 1996 and 2000 (*ABC*, 27 January 2002: 28; *El País*, 30 January 2000: 29; Nasarre 2002).

Policy outcome

In November 2001, the PSOE submitted a bill to the legislature on the reform of the 1985 General Electoral Act to make parity mandatory. The bill was debated and rejected in the legislature on 8 April 2003.⁹

Women's movement impact/State response

Continuous mobilisation in favour of higher levels of women's political representation and mandatory quotas has been a feature of Spanish politics since the late 1990s. Parity activists actively sought the advice of constitutional experts, some of whom declared that the bill was constitutional. They based their judgment on article 9.2 of the constitution which states that public power will promote the conditions under which citizens' freedom and equality are real and will facilitate citizens' participation in political, economic, cultural and social life (see, for instance, Peces-Barba 1999).

The PSOE bill on mandatory quotas was submitted in November 2001 to the legislature by two PSOE female deputies: Micaela Navarro, PSOE Women's Secretary, and María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, PSOE parliamentary spokesperson, who is known for her support of feminist causes. Female MPs played a central role in the parliamentary debate on the bill, a common phenomenon when the legislature is considering a women's issue. Thus, the state's response to women's movement parity advocates was one of *co-optation*, because the state accepted parity advocates in the policy-making process but did not give policy satisfaction to the parity mobilisation.

Women's policy agency activities and characteristics

The characteristics of the WI in this third debate were similar to the second phase of the second debate. The WI was a cross-sectional permanent bureaucratic agency distant from major centres of power. Its mandate is

⁹ The debate in the legislature can be consulted in the Congress of Deputies' web page (www.congreso.es).

broad and its extensive staff and budget gave it a high administrative capacity. In 2000, the PP appointed Pilar Dávila del Cerro as WI director. She was a former civil servant. To my knowledge, she had no ties with the feminist movement. She had significant experience in the policy area of women's rights because she was the WI sub-director between 1996 and 2000. Between September 2002 and March 2003, the WI director was Carmen de Miguel y García (a civil servant with expertise in trade issues). She was then replaced by Miriam Tey de Salvador (a professional with a previous career in the private publishing sector). Political representation was not a WI priority during conservative rule.

After the 1996 PP electoral victory, the WI did not support mandatory quotas. In the late 1990s, in reaction to the concept of 'parity democracy', the PP coined the expression of 'balanced representation' (*representación equilibrada*) (Jenson and Valiente 2003: 92). The WI produced a Fourth Gender Equality Plan in March 2003, extending the Third Equality Plan, which theoretically expired in 2000, until March 2003. According to the Third Equality Plan, the goal to be achieved regarding women and politics was 'balanced participation' (*participación equilibrada*) (Instituto de la Mujer 1997b: 55). This wording is also present in the Fourth Equality Plan to be implemented between 2003 and 2006 (Instituto de la Mujer 2003: 23–5). As in the Third Plan, the section on gender equality in decision-making is the shortest section. It offers 'soft measures' such as the improvement of statistics and research on the matter but not numerical targets (quotas). Thus, women's policy agency activities are *non-feminist* because the WI did not advocate the goals of the parity advocates. Instead it defended the weaker goal of balanced participation and the weaker method of soft measures.

The characteristics of the PSOE women's secretariat during the third debate were the same as during previous debates. With a medium administrative capacity and headed by a feminist socialist (Micaela Navarro) between 1997 and 2004, the PSOE women's secretariat continued to include women's political representation as one of its top priorities. The PSOE women's secretariat advocated the goal of the parity movement in the debate. It intervened in and gendered the debate. An example is the intervention by Micaela Navarro (not only PSOE women's secretary but also an MP) who defended the PSOE 2001 bill in the 8 April 2003 parliamentary debate.

Women's movement characteristics

As in previous debates, the feminist movement was in a stage of consolidation, was very close to the left and faced a moderately strong counter-

movement opposing quotas. The priority given to political representation by the sector of the feminist movement interested in the topic was high. This sector of the movement was cohesive, but cohesion did not mean frequent joint actions by different women's organisations. The location of activities of parity activists included not only autonomous women's groups and political parties (as in the second debate) but also the legislature. Parity activism was feminist.

Policy environment

The final part of the debate on the 2001 PSOE bill on the 40 per cent women's quota for all parties took place on 8 April 2003 in the legislature. It has some characteristics of closed policy environments: parliamentary proceedings are codified through regular meetings and rules, and participation is limited to leaders of political parties with parliamentary representation. The PP used its absolute majority in the legislature to reject the bill altogether. The frame of the parliamentary discussion prior to the rejection was compatible with that used in the women's movement to discuss political representation, since both frames deal with the same topics (although in a different manner).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the women's movement, the WI and the PSOE women's secretariat inserted their policy preferences in two of the three debates that preceded the most important public decisions on political representation (more specifically, on women's quotas) since the 1980s. The presence of the women's movement, WI and PSOE women's secretariat in these two debates occurred while political representation was an issue of high priority for both the movement and the women's policy agencies. The fact that the socialist party was in office was a key element for the policy success of the movement, the WI and the PSOE women's secretariat. In contrast, in the third debate the women's movement and the PSOE women's secretariat were still very attentive to the issue of political representation but did not secure approval of the bill, even though women participated extensively in the whole discussion. The closed policy environment and the low priority given to political representation by the WI were two major factors in the rejection of the PSOE bill on a 40 per cent mandatory quota for all parties.

Quotas have been implemented in the PSOE and constitute the main variable explaining the increase of women's presence in political decision-making positions (Threlfall 2001: 29). Although women's quotas have

been adopted exclusively by left-wing parties, the improvement in women's political representation is not a phenomenon restricted to left-wing politics. In part as a reaction to left-wing quotas, since the 1990s, the presence of conservative female politicians has also increased, to 28 per cent of PP deputies and 25 per cent of PP senators in 2004 (Instituto de la Mujer 2004). Ironically the indirect influence on political representation of the movement and policy machineries under socialist governments has been more extensive than their effect in the left side of the political spectrum.

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10 Party feminism, state feminism and women's representation in Sweden

Diane Sainsbury

Introduction

Issues of political representation in Sweden during the past four decades have been influenced by two processes: the modernisation of the world's second oldest written constitution adopted in 1809 and a struggle over extending democracy. Constitutional reform and enlarging democracy provided a contradictory setting – both hospitable and unfavourable – to women's demands for better political representation. Until recently feminist actors and perspectives were generally marginalised in discussions on constitutional reforms, with women at the last minute expressing apprehension that a specific reform would adversely affect their representation. By contrast, the discussion on extending democracy and promoting equality offered a discursive opportunity of crucial importance to the impressive growth of women's representation.

Besides issues of the day, aspects of the Swedish understanding of political representation have formed an auspicious environment. Historically social representation has had a strong tradition, dating from the establishment of the four estates parliament in 1435. This parliament originally rested on a broader basis than similar bodies elsewhere and survived much longer (until 1866). Social representation, combined with a constitutional provision that interested parties should be consulted in the decision-making process, and the idea of a representative bureaucracy paved the way for corporatist arrangements in policy-making and subsequently in administration. The political parties, in particular the Social Democrats, the Centre Party and the Conservatives (the Moderates since 1969), which have represented the interests of workers, farmers and business respectively, also carried on the tradition of social representation. The principle of proportional representation, which furthers representation of a broad spectrum of interests and ideas, has also been central to Swedish politics. It has been reflected not only in the electoral system since 1911 but also in the distribution of the chairpersons of parliamentary committees, the county governors, and in some cases