



# Discussion Paper: Gender and Politics

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## Voluntary Party Quotas: Japan's Status Quo and Lessons from Germany

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### 1. Introduction

Japan has a long lack of female lawmakers. According to the gender gap report released by the World Economic Forum's (WEF) in June, Japan's ranking was the lowest ever, 125th out of 146 countries, especially in the political field, where it ranked 138th.<sup>1</sup> In fact, if we look at the percentage of women in parliament: in the first postwar 1946 general election, the ratio of women in the House of Representatives (HR) was 8.4%, and in the most recent 2021 general election, it stood at 9.7%. There has been virtually no increase for around 70 years. Even in the most recent national election, the 2022 House of Councillors election, the ratio of women elected stood at 25.8%.

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Note: Not all references are available in English (All the links last accessed July 27, 2023).

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report 2023," p. 217, [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf).

This paucity of female lawmakers caused many in Japan to recognize the need to introduce a quota system, leading to the passage and enactment of the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field Act (政治分野男女共同参画推進法) in 2018.<sup>2</sup> The law in principle urges political parties to make the number of male and female candidates at every level as equal as possible, and requires each party to make efforts to set numerical targets for male and female candidates. In response, both the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) succeeded in fielding more than fifty percent of female candidates for the 2022 Upper House election. Although it is still far from achieving the appropriate gender balance in politics, the legislation was meaningful in itself. However, we are a long way from realizing gender equality in the political field here in Japan, and we need efforts from various quarters to achieve this.

Among measures considered necessary to increase the proportion of women in parliament and in politics, this discussion paper touches upon lessons from Germany on the debate over party quotas and aims to serve as a reference during the current debate in Japan. Quota systems are a means of affirmative action, allocating posts to minorities with the aim of reducing inequality. The gender quota system in the political arena stipulates either the portion of women or of both genders, with the aim of redressing the gender gap in the legislature.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Quotas and Political Parties

In order to fundamentally increase the percentage of women in parliament, we need to make the legislated candidate quota system more enforceable. However, although the 2018 Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field Act originally included realizing the "same number (同数)" of men and women candidates as its grand principle, this met with opposition from the ruling LDP, and the wording was amended to "equal (均等)."<sup>4</sup> When the law was revised in 2021, the LDP, the Japan Innovation Party (JIP), and Komeito did not come to terms with making the abovementioned numerical target for the number of men and women candidates fielded by each party obligatory. This suggests the high hurdles for introduction of a stricter candidate quota system.<sup>5</sup> The terms "same number" and "equal" were confirmed as legally synonymous, thus the opposition parties agreed to the revision.

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<sup>2</sup> Cabinet Office, "Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field Act," in effect since May 23, 2018, [https://www.gender.go.jp/about/danjo/law/pdf/law\\_seijibunya02.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/about/danjo/law/pdf/law_seijibunya02.pdf). The bill was legislators-sponsored.

<sup>3</sup> Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, "Glossary," [https://www.gender.go.jp/research/kenkyu/pdf/gaikou\\_research/2020/05.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/research/kenkyu/pdf/gaikou_research/2020/05.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Eiko, Ishige, "Seiji Bunya ni okeru Danjo Kyodo Sankaku no Suichin ni kansuru Houritsu' Seiritsu eno Keiii (Background of 'the Law for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field')", *International women*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 79-84, [https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/kokusajosei/32/1/32\\_79/\\_pdf/-char/ja](https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/kokusajosei/32/1/32_79/_pdf/-char/ja). At the time, a bill to allow gender-alternating proportional lists was also considered, but was shelved.

<sup>5</sup> Mari Miura, *Saraba, Dansei Seiji* (Good bye, men's politics) (Tokyo, 2023).

As already mentioned in the introduction, it is important for the public to keep a close eye on the positive initiatives taken by each party with regard to the legislated candidate quota system, as we have already seen a certain level of significant initiatives and results. In fact, in the 2022 Upper House election, the LDP set a target of 30% of female candidates in the proportional representation list, and the target was achieved just before the election.

What other measures could be taken to increase the number of female lawmakers? Examples include making the parliament a better place for women to work, improving the environment for women to run in elections, changing society's deep-rooted perception on the gender division of labor, reversing the biased perception that 'politics belongs to men,' and changing the mind-sets of both citizens and politicians. This relies on improving or transforming the assemblies, the whole society, or family and individual values. However, we would like to stress that political parties are the largest suppliers of human resources to politics, especially at the national level. In this sense, political parties should play a major role in enhancing the gender balance. By improving the gender balance within political parties themselves, we believe women's perspectives can be better reflected in party management and governance, including policymaking.

### 3. Female Representation in Party Leadership and National Diet

In June 2022, the House of Representatives (Lower House) released its report on the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) gender self-assessment survey, which found that 75% of eight Japanese political parties surveyed said that no quota system has been applied in their party leadership, while 62.5% of them said that party regulations encourage women to be promoted to key positions.<sup>6</sup>

As of October 2022, the female ratio of the party executives was 12% (out of 673) for the LDP, 33.3% (out of 9) for the CDP, 17.6% (out of 34) for Komeito, 8.6% (out of 35) for the JIP, and 27.7% (out of 220) for the JCP.<sup>7</sup> Gradually raising this to a critical mass would allow more women's voices to be reflected in the party's management,<sup>8</sup> including policymaking (Note: The total numbers of party board members vary in the first place). There is a tendency for left-wing parties to have a higher percentage of female executives than conservative-leaning parties (Table 1). To further increase this ratio, Japan could possibly introduce a policy for party leaders to consciously appoint women or to revise the party constitutions to this end.

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<sup>6</sup> House of Representatives, "June 2022, Report on IPU gender self-assessment survey political parties," pp. 28-29, [https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb\\_rchome.nsf/html/rchome/Shiryō/gender-houkokushohp20220609.pdf/\\$File/gender-houkokushohp20220609.pdf](https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_rchome.nsf/html/rchome/Shiryō/gender-houkokushohp20220609.pdf/$File/gender-houkokushohp20220609.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office "FY2022 Survey of Women's Participation in Policy and Policy Making," <https://www.gender.go.jp/research/kenkyu/sankakujokyo/2022/pdf/1-1-e.pdf>. This survey is based on each party's reporting.

<sup>8</sup> Watershed to become a group whose existence cannot be ignored, and the group beyond that is called the critical mass. "Critical Mass," Japan Association for Women's Education, <https://www.jawe2011.jp/cgi/keyword/keyword.cgi?num=n000285&mode=detail>.

**Table 1 Women's Participation in Japanese Political Parties**

	Party Members			Party Executives			Members of Lower House			Members of Upper House		
	Total	Female Members	Ratio of Women (%)	Total	Female Members	Ratio of Women (%)	Total	Female Members	Ratio of Women (%)	Total	Female Members	Ratio of Women (%)
<b>LDP</b>	1,122,664			673	81	12.0	261	20	7.7	118	23	19.5
<b>CDP</b>	–	–	–	9	3	33.3	97	13	13.4	39	17	43.6
<b>JIP</b>	39,914	16,058	40.2	35	3	8.6	40	4	10.0	21	4	19.0
<b>Komeito</b>	450,000	–	–	34	6	17.6	32	4	12.5	27	4	14.8
<b>DPP (*)</b>	–	–	77.4	17	4	23.5	10	1	10.0	10	3	30.0
<b>JCP</b>	260,000	127,400	49.0	220	61	27.7	10	2	20.0	11	5	45.5

(\*) Democratic Party For the People

Source: Author's compilation from Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office "FY2022 Survey of Women's Participation in Policy and Policy Making"

The conservative LDP included the appointment of women to party's executive positions in its "Governance Code."<sup>9</sup> To achieve this goal, they set up a project team under the Headquarters for Implementing Party Reform. They formulated an action plan for the development and promotion of the party's female assembly members in June 2023.<sup>10</sup> Although it does not explicitly indicate a targeted ratio of female party executives, it does call for the promotion of women's participation in decision-making in party structures. And most of all, it is epoch-making in its commitment to increase the conservative party's own ratio of female lawmakers in the National Diet from 11% to 30% in the next ten years. To this end, they make it a principle to select candidates for the Lower House election by open call. Listing women in the upper ranks of the Lower House proportional representation list is progressive in itself among the Japanese political parties. Meanwhile, there could be a backlash or opposition within the party against listing women in higher ranks, and the question is how to make this enforceable.

The CDP, in its party constitution, requires its party president to consider gender balance when selecting members of the party's executive. The party in its 2022 policy book clearly states that they will raise the female ratio of assembly members for both national and local legislatures to 30% by 2030. The Social Democratic Party stipulates in its constitution that the party endeavors to guarantee that a certain percentage of women and socially vulnerable groups will be appointed as executives of party organizations. These measures are very important, however, we believe further efforts should be made to increase the number of female politicians, while at the same time increasing the number of female party executives and optimizing party organizations.

We refer to the efforts of the political parties in Germany to address this issue, including specific reference to the example of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

<sup>9</sup> The Liberal Democratic Party, "LDP Governance Code," October 25, 2022, [https://storage.jimin.jp/pdf/news/information/204463\\_1.pdf](https://storage.jimin.jp/pdf/news/information/204463_1.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> The Liberal Democratic Party, Headquarters for Implementing Party Reform, "Basic Plan for the Development and Promotion of Female Assembly Members," June 15, 2023, [https://storage.jimin.jp/pdf/news/information/206108\\_2.pdf](https://storage.jimin.jp/pdf/news/information/206108_2.pdf).

## 4. Lessons from Germany

While there are many cultural differences between Japan and Germany, one similarity lies in the view of women's social roles, such as "women should stay at home."<sup>11</sup> On the other hand female representation in the Bundestag, the Lower House of the German parliament, climbed to 34.9% after the 2021 election,<sup>12</sup> in stark contrast to the situation in Japan's Lower House.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, nearly half of German cabinet members are women, indicating that Germany has achieved female political participation in this regard.<sup>14</sup> What efforts have been effective to increase women's participation in politics?

The German Bundestag enacted the Law on Equal Treatment of Men and Women at Work Act (*Gesetz über die Gleichbehandlung von Männern und Frauen am Arbeitsplatz*) in 1980,<sup>15</sup> which effectively prohibits gender-based discrimination in employment. However, this law was only an effort regulation without sanctions and did not necessarily improve social conditions.<sup>16</sup> Rather than relying on legislations, the parties in the Bundestag have actively promoted women's participation and led public opinion by introducing a quota system. As we will see below, in most cases, the quota systems of German political parties include both (1) executive quota systems and (2) candidate quota systems in proportional electoral lists.

The first party to take the lead in the quota system was the Green Party, which won seats in the Bundestag for the first time in 1983 on a platform of ecology, anti-nuclear weapons and anti-nuclear power, and feminism. The fact that the Greens sent ten female out of their 28 members to the Bundestag and elected women as all six of the party's executive members in 1984 attracted a great deal of attention.<sup>17</sup> In 1986, the party adopted the "Women's Code (*Frauenstatut*)" as an addendum to its party constitution. This

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<sup>11</sup> For example, according to a 2020 report by the Cabinet Office, 35.8% of respondents in Germany expressed support for the idea that husbands should work outside the home and wives should stay at home. In Japan, 42.1% were in favor. Cabinet Office, "2020 International Attitude Survey Report on Societies with Declining Birthrate," p. 64, [https://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/shoushika/research/r02/kokusai/pdf/zentai/s2\\_4.pdf](https://www8.cao.go.jp/shoushi/shoushika/research/r02/kokusai/pdf/zentai/s2_4.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> DHB, Kapitel 3.6 Weibliche Abgeordnete, 23. Mai 2023, S. 1, [https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/272482/c90ba6351dc8dd56d2961f5ddb94262d/Kapitel\\_03\\_06\\_Weibliche\\_Abgeordnete-pdf-data.pdf](https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/272482/c90ba6351dc8dd56d2961f5ddb94262d/Kapitel_03_06_Weibliche_Abgeordnete-pdf-data.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> According to the IPU's 2023 country rankings on the percentage of women in parliament, Germany is in 45th place out of a total of 186 countries, while Japan is in 164th place. IPU, "Women in Politics: 2023," <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2023-03/women-in-politics-2023>.

<sup>14</sup> In the ranking of the percentage of female cabinet ministers, Germany ranks 9th and Japan 164th out of 190 countries. Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Since gender equality was considered self-evident in the former East Germany, which was a socialist state, this paper only refers to the former West Germany.

<sup>16</sup> Keiko Hamasaki, "Doitsu ni okeru Danjo Kyodo Sankaku Shakai no Kokoromi: 'Quota (Wariai) Sei' no Zehi wo megutte" ("Attempts to Achieve a Gender-Equal Society in Germany: On the Pros and Cons of the 'Quota (Percentage) System,'" Foreign Language Studies, Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, Vol. 59, pp.123-143 (2004), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48511838.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Michael F. Feldkamp, Christa Sommer: Parlaments- und Wahlstatistik des Deutschen Bundestages 1949-2002/03. Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Bundestag Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Berlin 31. Juli 2003, S. 19, [https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/189602/3a1c9ddac371d9981ca494ec33046b5b/statistik\\_download-data.pdf](https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/189602/3a1c9ddac371d9981ca494ec33046b5b/statistik_download-data.pdf); „Spitze entmannt“, DER SPIEGEL 15/1984, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/spitze-entmannt-a-96829945-0002-0001-0000-000013508368>.

included two requirements: firstly, that at least 50% of the members of all internal party organizations (*Gremium*) should be women,<sup>18</sup> and secondly, that all odd-numbered candidates on all proportional electoral lists should be women (i.e., the top of the list should be a woman) and male and female candidates should be placed alternately. These by-laws were upgraded to part of the party constitution in 1995 and played an important role in achieving women's participation in the party, including the establishment of the Women's Council (*Frauenrat*).

After the 1987 election, which followed the adoption of the "Women's Code," the Greens sent 25 female members (56.8%) to the Bundestag, forcing other parties to address the issue of women's participation. This particularly affected the established Social Democratic Party (SPD), which had been discussing the introduction of a quota system since the late 1970s, but allowed the Greens to take the lead. In 1988, two years after the Greens' "Women's Code," the SPD decided to amend its party constitution and introduce a quota system at its party congress. Unlike that of the Greens, it did not specify only the percentage of women but set a minimum target of 40% for both men and women in the membership of all party organizations and on all proportional electoral lists,<sup>19</sup> which was to be introduced gradually.<sup>20</sup> The introduction of the quota system not only changed the composition of the SPD executive, but also increased the percentage of female members of the Bundestag from only 8.5% in 1980 to 20.5% in 1990. This shows that the above efforts have had an effect (Table 2).

The Left Party (*Die Linke*), another left-wing party in the Bundestag, has had a 50% quota system since the days of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), one of its predecessor parties.<sup>21</sup> The other parties are the CDU/CSU (Christian Social Union) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP),<sup>22</sup> which take a conservative line, and the far-right party Alternative

<sup>18</sup> The party constitution stipulates, for example, that at least 50% of the federal executives, including two co-party leaders, and the party council, etc., should be women. "Grüne Regeln", S. 15, [https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/documents/221128\\_Gr%C3%BCne-Regeln\\_Satzung\\_Bundesverband.pdf](https://cms.gruene.de/uploads/documents/221128_Gr%C3%BCne-Regeln_Satzung_Bundesverband.pdf) (Stand: 16. Oktober 2022).

<sup>19</sup> It is stipulated that the two co-party leaders should be one male and one female.

<sup>20</sup> Tsuyoshi Nakatani, "Doitsu ni okeru Josei Giin no Quota Sei: Doitsu Shakai Minshu To no Jirei wo chushin ni (The Quota System for Female Parliamentarians in Germany: The Case of the German Social Democratic Party)", *The Annals of Japanese Political Science Association*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (2010), pp. 48-67, [https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/nenpouseijigaku/61/2/61\\_2\\_48/\\_pdf-char/ja](https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/nenpouseijigaku/61/2/61_2_48/_pdf-char/ja). This system was initially introduced with a temporal constraint, but it was later repealed and the quota system is retained in the current party constitution. SPD, "Organisationsstatut", S.18, 48, [https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Parteiorganisation/SPD\\_Orgastatut\\_2022\\_barrierearm.pdf](https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Parteiorganisation/SPD_Orgastatut_2022_barrierearm.pdf) (Stand: 11. Dezember 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Cabinet Office, "Survey on Women's Participation in Policy-Making Processes in Other Countries: Republic of Germany, Republic of France, Republic of Korea, and Republic of the Philippines," p. 50, <https://www.gender.go.jp/research/kenkyu/sekkyoku/pdf/h19shogaikoku/sec2.pdf>. See also for the Left Party's party constitution. "Bundessatzung der Partei DIE LINKE", [https://www.die-linke.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/die\\_linke\\_bundessatzung\\_erfurt2022.pdf](https://www.die-linke.de/fileadmin/user_upload/die_linke_bundessatzung_erfurt2022.pdf) (Stand: 27 Juni 2022).

<sup>22</sup> The CSU is a sister party of the CDU and belongs to the same faction as the CDU, yet due to its regional nature limited to Bavaria, it is not discussed in this paper. The current party constitution of the CSU stipulates that positions in the party's working groups should be held 50% each by men and women, and that half of the elected executives should be women. "Satzung der Christlich Sozialen Union", S. 12, [https://www.csu.de/com-mon/csu/content/csu/hauptnavigation/partei/satzung/Satzung\\_komplett.pdf](https://www.csu.de/com-mon/csu/content/csu/hauptnavigation/partei/satzung/Satzung_komplett.pdf) (Stand: 19. Oktober 2019). Regarding the FDP, although it adopted a resolution at its 2006 party congress stipulating that 30% of the members in all party organizations be women, no further progress has been made. "Wenn zum Frauentag ein Mann spricht", taz, 24. März 2021, <https://taz.de/Frauenpolitik-der-FDP/!5097679/>.

for Germany (AfD), of which only the CDU/CSU have explicit quota systems. In the following section, we will examine the CDU's efforts to promote women's participation despite its conservative political views.

**Table 2 Ratio of Women in the German Bundestag (Parliament)**

Electoral Term	Total Number of MPs/ Female Members	Ratio of Women (%)
(1) 1949-53	410/ 28	6.8
(2) 1953-57	509/ 45	8.8
(3) 1957-61	519/ 48	9.2
(4) 1961-65	521/ 43	8.3
(5) 1965-69	518/ 36	6.9
(6) 1969-72	518/ 34	6.6
(7) 1972-76	518/ 30	5.8
(8) 1976-80	518/ 38	7.3
(9) 1980-83	519/ 44	8.5
(10) 1983-87	520/ 51	9.8
(11) 1987-90	519/ 80	15.4
(12) 1990-94	662/136	20.5
(13) 1994-98	672/176	26.2
(14) 1998-02	669/207	30.9
(15) 2002-05	603/196	32.5
(16) 2005-09	614/195	31.8
(17) 2009-13	622/204	32.8
(18) 2013-17	631/230	36.5
(19) 2017-21	709/219	30.9
(20) 2021-	736/257	34.9

All figures are as of the start of the term of office.

Source: Feldkamp, Sommer (2003) up to the 15th term, Author's compilation from the DHB for the 16th term and onward.

## 5. CDU's Efforts to Introduce a Quota System

The CDU, which was the ruling party from the immediate postwar period until the late 1960s, also formulated guidelines for gender equality in 1988.<sup>23</sup> These stipulated that the number of women in executive positions and female candidates on proportional electoral lists should correspond to the percentage of female party members. However, during the 1990s, while the SPD and the Greens steadily increased their female membership by introducing a quota system, the CDU's female representation stagnated. In fact, in the 13th legislative period following the 1994 Bundestag election, the CDU had the lowest percentage of female members of any party with seats in the Bundestag, standing at 13.9% (Table 3).

In order to overcome this situation, the CDU finally decided to introduce a quota system at its party congress in 1996, with this clearly stated in the party constitution. Specifically, "Equality between women and men" was introduced as a new Article 15, which

<sup>23</sup> Hamasaki, op. cit., p. 131.

**Table 3 Ratio of Women in Parliamentary Groups in the Bundestag since 1983 (%)**

Electoral Term	CDU/CSU	SPD	FDP	The Greens	The Left	AfD
(10) 1983-87	6.7	10.4	8.6	35.7	–	–
(11) 1987-90	7.7	16.1	12.5	56.8	–	–
(12) 1990-94	13.8	27.2	20.3	37.5	47.1	–
(13) 1994-98	13.9	33.7	17.0	59.2	43.3	–
(14) 1998-02	18.4	35.2	20.9	57.4	58.3	–
(15) 2002-05	23.0	37.9	21.3	58.2	–	–
(16) 2005-09	19.9	36.0	24.6	56.9	48.1	–
(17) 2009-13	20.1	38.4	24.7	54.4	52.6	–
(18) 2013-17	25.1	42.0	–	55.6	56.2	–
(19) 2017-21	19.9	41.8	23.8	58.2	53.6	10.9
(20) 2021-	23.4	41.7	25.0	59.3	53.8	13.4

All figures are as of the start of the term of office.

Source: Feldkamp, Sommer (2003) up to the 15th term, author's compilation from the DHB for the 16th term and onward.

states that every level of the party organization is obligated to realize legal and practical equality between men and women and that at least one-third of the party executives and members of parliament (*öffentliches Mandat*) should be women. However, the CDU's constitution described its quota system as a "*Frauenquorum*", a more ambiguous term, in consideration of the opposition from conservatives. Moreover, the CDU's "quorum" system had more loopholes than those of the left-wing parties. For example, if the proportion of women among the elected party executives by position fell below one-third, re-election was required, but if this was still not achieved, the re-election results could stand and no further action would be taken. In the case of proportional electoral lists, the party also permitted the number of female candidates to be less than one third, if this could be justified by prior declarations.<sup>24</sup>

The "*quorum*" system, initially introduced with a five-year term,<sup>25</sup> was then applied without a fixed term, and in 2000 the first female CDU party leader was elected. This was Angela Merkel, who went on to serve as Federal Chancellor for 16 years and became famous throughout the world. However, Merkel herself did not actively promote women's participation within the CDU as party leader, and less than 20% of the CDU members elected in the 2017 federal election were women. The following federal election in 2021, in which Merkel had announced her decision not to run, resulted in the SPD taking over as the largest party for the first time in 16 years. Analysis of voter behavior showed that the CDU had lost a significant portion of the female vote.<sup>26</sup> This forced the conservative Friedrich Merz, who took over as party leader in January 2022, to take initiatives to promote women's participation in the party, despite his initial reluctance to strengthen the

<sup>24</sup> CDU, „Statutenbroschüre“, S. 12, [https://archiv.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/statutenbroschuere\\_cdu\\_verlinkt.pdf?file=1](https://archiv.cdu.de/system/tdf/media/dokumente/statutenbroschuere_cdu_verlinkt.pdf?file=1) (Stand: 25. February 2019).

<sup>25</sup> CDU, „Protokoll des 14. Parteitags“, 2001, S. 209, [https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/2001-12-02+04\\_Protokoll\\_14.Parteitag\\_Dresden.pdf/76dae4c1-b600-0bce-1f67-2cb80c052e86](https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/2001-12-02+04_Protokoll_14.Parteitag_Dresden.pdf/76dae4c1-b600-0bce-1f67-2cb80c052e86).

<sup>26</sup> „Wer wählt was?“, tagesschau, 27. September 2021, <https://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/archiv/2021-09-26-BT-DE/umfrage-werwas.shtml>.



quota system.<sup>27</sup>

In September 2022, one year after its narrow defeat in the federal election, the CDU decided at its party congress to introduce a phased-in quota system to reach 50% of female participation. The current party constitution stipulates that (1) 30% of party executives at the district (*Kreis*) level and above should be women by 2023, rising to 40% by 2024, and finally reaching 50% by July 2025,<sup>28</sup> and (2) at least half of the top ten candidates on the proportional electoral list should be women, as a phased-in candidate quota. Furthermore, when electing party executives for each position,<sup>29</sup> if the desired gender ratio is not achieved even after re-election, the position will remain vacant.<sup>30</sup>

However, it should be noted that the measure did not receive a significant majority of support at the party congress, with only 559 out of the 1,001 delegates voting in favor and 409 voted against. Consequently, in view of opposition from the conservative wing of the party, the CDU decided to introduce this measure as a temporary solution until 2029, at which point an evaluation would be carried out.<sup>31</sup>

The CDU's revision of its party constitution to include a quota system has led to some progress in women's participation in the party. However, the party is still only half-way towards achieving the 50% quota and it is unclear to what extent it can realize this goal in the future, especially given the low number of female party members (Chart 1). To address this issue and increase female representation within the party, the CDU must identify and implement measures to attract more women to become party members. In any case, we await further evaluation of the CDU's 50% quota system.

## 6. Challenges in the Future and Implications

As discussed, the introduction of a voluntary party quotas in Germany has been an important factor in promoting women's participation in politics. Of course, the ratio of female members of the Bundestag represents only one aspect of the issue and Germany

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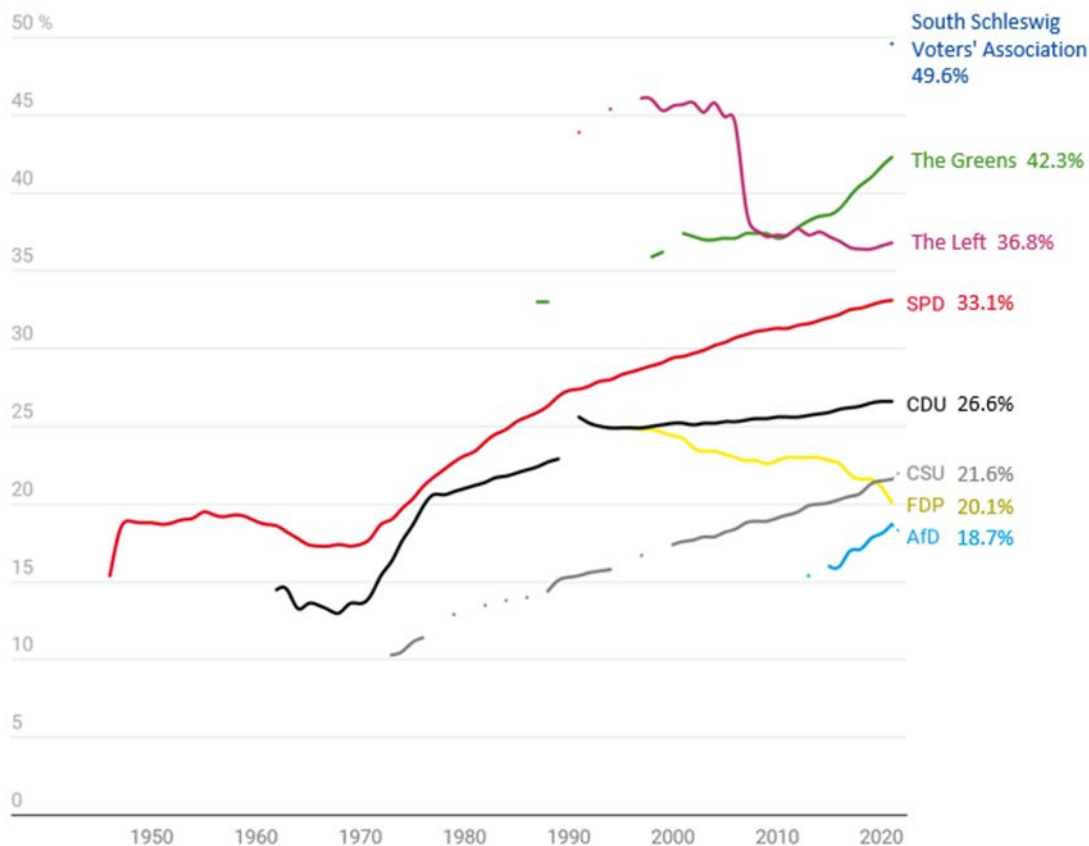
<sup>27</sup> „Friedrich Merz: Bessere Chancen für Frauen ja, Männer-Diskriminierung nein“, FOCUS online, 10. Juli 2020, [https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/focus-online-interview-friedrich-merz\\_id\\_12193965.html](https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/focus-online-interview-friedrich-merz_id_12193965.html). Within the CDU, discussions on the introduction of a female quota (*Frauenquote*) had already begun in 2020, before the 2021 Congressional elections. „Rita Süßmuth warnt eigene Partei vor Scheitern der Frauenquote“, ZEIT ONLINE, 9. Juli 2020, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2020-07/rita-suessmuth-frauenquote-cdu-parteitag-geschlechterparitaet-gleichstellung>.

<sup>28</sup> Beschlüsse des 35. Bundesparteitags der CDU Deutschlands, „Änderungen des Statuts,“ <https://www.cdu-parteitag.de/file/5450/download?token=imelZ0FQ>.

<sup>29</sup> With regard to the federal party leader, the women's quota does not apply to the CDU since the party has one party leader, unlike the SPD and the Greens.

<sup>30</sup> According to Article 15.3 of the CDU's constitution, if there are not enough female winners in the election for a position for which a female quota is required, the male and female candidates who receive a majority of the votes will be elected. A re-election is to be held for the remaining seats, and if the female quota is still not achieved even after the re-election, the seat is to remain vacant. For example, in the case of a ten-seat position in a phase that implements a 30% female quota, there will be a maximum of seven male officers, and if only two women are elected, one seat will remain vacant.

<sup>31</sup> „CDU bekommt Frauenquote“, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 09. September 2022, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/cdu-parteitag-frauenquote-1.5654606>.

**Chart 1 Ratio of Female Party Members of Each Party in the Bundestag, 1946-2021**

Source: Compiled by the Federal Agency for Civic Education from Niedermayer: Parteimitgliederdatenbank

is far from achieving a substantial gender balance in politics as a whole. As Chart 1 shows, the percentage of women in party membership remains low in all political parties, and some argue that the introduction of a 50% quota for women in the election of party executives and on proportional electoral lists is not realistic. The looming sense of the gender division of labor that still exists in German society will not be easily changed by the quota system alone.

However, it is noteworthy that after the Greens and the SPD introduced the quota system, the percentage of women in the Bundestag, which had not changed significantly since 1949, rose to the double digits and has remained consistently above 30% since the late 1990s, when the CDU finally followed suit. It has proved to be more effective to implement measures starting with the left-wing parties and have them accepted later by conservatives. Today, Germany is expanding the quota system under political leadership, such as legislating certain quotas for women on corporate boards (*Aufsichtsrat*) and federal agencies, and mandating women's participation on the boards of directors of some private companies.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See below for details. Makiko Izumi, "Doitsu Renpo Kyowakoku ni okeru Danjo Byodo Rippo: Dainiji Shido teki Chii Ho ni itaru made (Gender Equality Legislation in the Federal Republic of Germany: Up to the Second Leadership Status

In Japan, the legislated candidate quota system was enacted, but the parties have only been obliged to make efforts to set a target number of male and female candidates with its grand principle of an equal gender candidacy making the legislation less enforceable. Under these circumstances, it is significant the LDP announced the above mentioned action plan for the development and promotion of the party's female assembly members, which is in line with those of the German political parties. The action plan, in order to achieve the goal of a 30% ratio of female LDP lawmakers at the National Diet level in the next ten years, is comprehensive, including not only stipulating of the principle of open call candidate selection and listing women in the upper ranks of the Lower House proportional representation lists, but also support for their local chapters, and a mentoring system. The biggest significance lies with the fact that the LDP clarified the time frame and concrete measures to be taken.

To ensure the effectiveness of the quota system, it would be important to clearly set specific ratio and time frames in a phased manner in powerful documents such as party constitutions, as the German parties have done. Furthermore, Japan might consider a mechanism to increase or decrease the amount of government subsidies to political parties by linking the degree of achievement of the ratio of female lawmakers and female executives in each party under the Party Subsidies Law (政党助成法). If the LDP can implement their plan effectively, it will generate a cross-interaction with other parties and a ripple effect as we argue was achieved in Germany,

## 7. Conclusions

The sole purpose of the affirmative actions mentioned in this paper is to enable women's voices to be properly heard in politics. We accept that not all causes that prevent women running for elections, such as the gender division of labor or the social structure, and the burdens placed on women, can be solved by politics or political parties alone. However, political parties are the largest supplier of human resources in national politics and can exert strong influence on both the bureaucracy and policy-making. It is for this reason that the development of gender equality in political parties is crucial, and we believe it desirable for a balanced policy-making mechanism to be spread and strengthened throughout politics via the diversification of human resources within political parties. The Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field Act plays a significant role as a framework. We hope that in the future each party will embrace its diversity in response to the increasingly manifold nature of society and promote internal gender balance, and that this article will serve as a reference for future discussions and initiatives of the political parties in Japan.

*This article reflects the sole opinion of the authors and does not present the official standpoint of KAS.*

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