



WORLD AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN 2022

Opinions from “Women in Foreign Policy”

Zeynep Alemdar, Bezen Balamir Coşkun, Ayşegül Gökalp Kutlu (eds.)

About WFP

The Women in Foreign Policy (DPK) Initiative of Turkey was established to promote women's voices on hard security issues; to encourage female participation in foreign policy decision-making at all levels, with bottom-up and non-hierarchical approaches; and to involve women at all levels of peacemaking, historical reconciliation and resolving frozen conflicts so that they may share their experiences and develop long-term policy recommendations. DPK aims to include women's perspectives in all areas of international relations by encouraging young women to become leaders in foreign policy fields and by taking responsibility for meeting global challenges that hamper equitable and sustainable development..

Why?

- To share experiences to understand and provide solutions for the problems we face at individual, national and global level.
- To mobilize collective expertise, build partnerships, promote collaboration and facilitate smoother processes.
- To empower young women to become an active part of foreign policy mechanisms.

What do we do?

- Provide opportunities for discussion of international politics and foreign policy
- Develop recommendations and concepts to increase the role of women in foreign policy
- Create networks to include women in the foreign policy community
- Provide a platform for discussions on foreign policy issues by emphasizing the interdependency of domestic and external issues
- Aim to make women decision makers in all areas of foreign policy
- Provide educational opportunities, such as workshops and seminars, for women to increase their knowledge of global citizenship and policy development
- Develop opportunities for women to participate in activities where they can have leadership roles

Foreword

Zeynep Alemdar

After the Earthquake

1. Disasters and the Color Purple

Menekşe Tokyay

2. Earthquake and Diplomacy

Barçın Yinanç

3. The Political Aftershocks of Turkey's Earthquake

Ayla Jean Yackley

DPK Opinions on 2022

4. Taliban Back in Afghanistan

Ayşegül Gökalp Kutlu

5. 2022 Iran Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom

Tuğba Bayar

6. The International Dimension of the 2022 Iran Protests

Derya Göçer

7. Geopolitics of 'Traditional Values' in the context of Russia

Gökten Doğangün

8. Mass Movement of Ukrainian Refugees Revealing Identity Politics within the EU

Müge Dalkıran & Başak Kale

9. The European Union's Response to the War in Ukraine and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

Gökçen Yavaş

10. Global Women, Peace and Security Agenda in 2022
Burcu Özdemir Sarıgil
11. Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda
Aslıhan Turan
12. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN)
Esra Dilek
13. ASEAN Regional Plan of Action Women, Peace and Security
Ayşegül Gökalp Kutlu
14. Key Takeaways From COP27 Climate Conference
Umay Yılmaz
15. Women Leadership and Climate Mitigation
Ebru Canan-Sokullu, Ash Çalım & Dize Doğan
16. Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality: Progress and Challenges
Bezen Balamir Coşkun
17. Female Founders of 2022 and an Insight into VC Founding
Nilsu Derici
18. An Eventful Year for Post-Brexit Britain
Bezen Balamir Coşkun
19. The Historical Presidential Elections in Brazil and the First Lady Effect
Ekin Ürgen
20. Israeli Elections 2022 and Women's Political Representation in Israel
Tuğçe Ersoy Ceylan
21. Women in Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict: Between Violence and Demands for Peace
Bilge Şahin
22. NATO's 2022 Priorities
Sinem Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Sezen Kaya-Sönmez

Foreword

*Zeynep Alemdar**

In the midst of preparing our 4th almanac, on February 6th, two major earthquakes struck south-eastern Turkey. We are all deeply shocked and traumatized by the devastation of the earthquakes. More than 50 thousand lives are lost (as of February 27th) and countless people are injured. We are bewildered by grief and mourning for all those who lost their lives and livelihoods.

The earthquake unearthed the lack of accountability and meritocracy, and absence of science-based governance. Those who lived through the 1999 Marmara earthquake and faced the malpractices of the government at the time are surprised to see similar failings. The only thing that has not changed since 1999 was the persistent solidarity and rescue efforts of the civil society.

Women in Foreign Policy issued two declarations in the aftermath of the earthquakes. First was to attract attention to the gendered needs of the people in the disaster zones. We called upon all authorities and all those who wanted to help that disaster management and reconstruction efforts to take into account gender equality and avoid any forms of discrimination since natural disasters do not affect everyone equally. Gendered roles and socioeconomic differences skew the destructive impact. Physical, psychological, and reproductive health of women and girls who survived the earthquake must be acknowledged as vital factors for their wellbeing in the relief and reconstruction phase.

Our second call was about the interruption of education at the Universities. We underlined that online education was not accessible to all in the age of digital inequalities and furthermore, healing from this disaster would only come through face to face interaction amongst all those affected, university campuses are places of solidarity and centers of scientific knowledge.

The Women in Foreign Policy's Almanac starts with three pieces on the earthquake and then covers the world in 2022, through a gendered lense. From the war in Ukraine to NATO's 2022 priorities, from elections in Brazil and Israel to Sustainable Development Goals and the COP27 meetings, we covered main events of the 2022 with a particular emphasis on women's interests. How did they affect women, what did women do in face of the developments were the questions that guided us while taking a stock of the year.

Women in Foreign Policy Initiative's members started writing their Almanac entries in December 2022. All through voluntary efforts, we have brought together 22 entries focusing on different parts of the world and on different themes. Three members of the WFP went through all the texts and writers revised their parts. Bezen Balamir Coşkun, Ayşegül Gökalp and myself have collected and reviewed the entries, Gökçe Gezer, as always, prepared it for publication, Ekin Ürgen helped us put the Almanac on the website and Zeynep Naz Coşkun contributed to translate some of the entries into Turkish. Heartfelt thanks go to all of them and to all the contributors. We should also note that all views are of authors' own.

* *Founder of WFP, Okan University*

The Almanac 2022 comes to you, as in the previous years, as the signature publication of WFP, as a fruit of solidarity through a gentle process of production. In these testing times for all of us in Turkey, we do believe in the healing power of a joint effort to relay our knowledge, our inquiries, concerns and solutions.

We pay our respects to all those who have lost their lives in the earthquakes in Turkey, in the protests in Iran, under the Taliban regime, during the Ukraine War. We thank all women who work on peace, from the Tigray region in Ethiopia to Mediterranean and through the NATO's corridors in Brussels. We salute all our sisters who strive to build their worlds as better places.



After the Earthquake

Disasters and the Color Purple

*Menekşe Tokyay**

Beyond being a mixture of red and blue, purple is a rebellion against patriarchal order and the background color of solidarity among women. Legend has it that in the tradition of the Yoruks, when a woman wears a short coat having purple pockets with yellow embroidery on the edges that she took out of her dowry bundle and went out to the village square for everyone to see, she would inform the village that she was being abused or mistreated by her husband or that she was feeling uneasy about it, and asked for help from other villagers.

When it comes to violence against women, the color purple symbolizes both solidarity and blackened eyes as a result of masculine violence, and scars that can/cannot be scabbed. According to [the data](#) of the Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey (TKDF), 381 women were murdered last year. Some of them “fell from the balcony” under the name of “suspicious” death.

Even though the earthquake sequence that started on February 6 and affected 10 provinces caused a brief stagnation in cases of violence against women, the codes of the masculine order came into play again and the women who survived the rubble are now starting to scream for “living humanely”.

Disasters deepen existing inequalities in a society where, after leaving the Istanbul Convention with a unilateral decision overnight, the gains that women have made by scratching with their nails for years dissolve on the psychological ground and gender inequality deepens year by year. However, women’s right to seek asylum stemming from gender-based violence is a fundamental right with constitutional guarantees.

The situation of the woman who took shelter in her ex-wife’s house with her children after the earthquake in Hatay, thinking it was “safer”, but was poured on hot water by the ex-husband, who embraced the armor of impunity by saying “my hand trembled in the aftershock, water spilled” demonstrates the gender inequalities in Turkey.

This and many more examples will continue to take place in this chaotic environment. Women living in mixed tent camps will live in fear of who will enter every time the tent zipper is opened... Cases of violence and abuse after the 1999 earthquake, the 50% increase in domestic violence cases after Hurricane Andrew in South Florida, USA, and the escalation of physical violence against women after Hurricane Katrina in 2001 are just a few examples.[†]

Still, the domestic law in Turkey necessitates the providing of the necessary conditions for women to lead a life free from all kinds of violence, abuse and exploitation, and requires the establishment of an infrastructure to take preventive and protective measures against potential perpetrators. This means the protection of women and the social, medical and legal empowerment of women in need of amnesty.

**Journalist and columnist*

[†] Gearhart, S., Perez-Patron, M., Hammond, T. A., Goldberg, D. W., Klein, A., & Horney, J. A. (2018). The Impact of Natural Disasters On Domestic Violence: An Analysis of Reports of Simple Assault in Florida (1999–2007). *Violence and Gender*, 5(2), sf. 87–92.

Since the first day, a lot of aid has been sent to the disaster area under the roof of civil society that strengthens women's solidarity. In accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it was originally aimed to meet physiological needs. Then, safety needs and psycho-social empowerment efforts began to come into play.

Finally, the intense efforts of TKDF President Canan Güllü since mid-February bore fruit and the project to establish Purple Campuses for twelve months in the earthquake zone consisting of two 21 square meters containers was initiated.

Seeing that women's human rights are secondary in times of disaster, aid is provided "gender-blindly", many physiological and health needs from menstrual poverty to reproductive health are ignored, and psychological wounds deepen, it is critical to eliminate the deprivation of women at all levels in gender-sensitive disaster management.

It is known that women currently live in tent camps, deprived of the privacy of a home. The woman, who changed her underwear in her own home a few weeks ago, now cannot find a safe place even while fulfilling her most basic physiological needs in crowded tents. Moreover, this uneasiness increases while meeting the toilet needs in tent camps; she must have someone accompanying her.

The same is true for young girls and earthquake survivors living alone/widowed. The right to privacy in shared environments is also violated, as single-person tents are not provided to single earthquake survivors. However, housing is a fundamental human right, beyond all genders, and after this latest disaster, women's right to adequate and healthy housing has also been violated.

In order to prevent the security problems experienced by women in their "new normal" and within the framework of gender roles in the post-disaster processes, it is important to develop social networks to support the creation of conditions befitting human dignity, as well as the increase of gender-sensitive criminal sanctions.

In line with this goal, the Purple Campuses were established with the support of the private sector, municipalities and universities, and they envision creating safe spaces for women free from violence, violations of privacy and the risk of abuse. Because while the wounds of a disaster are healed, other psychological and physiological disasters should not be paved for women.

This system will provide that when a woman or a girl has been subjected to violence or abuse, she will not ignore this violation of rights due to the earthquake conditions and will seek refuge in the Purple Campus. The authorities in the Purple Campus, on the other hand, will protect the woman by conveying the situation to the competent authorities.

TKDF has a significant experience and knowledge in this field for years; because every year thousands of women report violence to the Violence Hotline they coordinate, and through this hotline, the relevant authorities will act and women will be protected.

Similarly, a girl who opposes the attitude of her family who decides to marry her off thinking that their future life will be more difficult than before, and who wants to study and decide on her own marriage, also seeks shelter in the Purple Campus to protect herself against this violation of rights. Access to this protection facility will also be easy, as a Purple Campus will be set up at each tented camp.

Women and girls who are embarrassed to ask the authorities for menstrual products or underwear will also be able to access the desired products in the amount they want in the Purple Campuses. Women who suspect vaginal or urinary tract infection will request support for accessing the relevant doctor here. This, in turn, will be convenient in terms of overcoming the patriarchal pressure and sociological barriers established by the disaster periods on the basic needs of women.

As a standard, there will be professional and volunteer psychologists, child development specialists and nurses in Purple Campuses. A girl or young girl who took shelter here because of abuse by an acquaintance in the co-habited tent will also be able to have a gynecological examination here.

Disasters are “genderless”, but what makes the post-disaster process even more severe and “sexist” for women is the lack of a woman-sensitive policy chain in managing this period. Therefore, Purple Campuses will be an important reference for the development of sensitive disaster management policies towards women, who make up half of the society.

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Earthquake ve Diplomacy

*Barçın Yinanç**

Two horrific 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude sequential earthquakes that hit Turkey and Syria on February 6 have led to an unprecedented international response while triggering at the same time a series of disaster diplomacy. On the third week of the earthquakes in Maraş, the official death toll surpassed 45 thousand in Turkey, it was nearing 6 thousand in Syria.

One and a half hours after the first earthquake, Turkey made an official request to activate the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The first search and rescue teams from Europe were on their way to Turkey within 24 hours.

In two weeks' time, the number of countries that had sent search and rescue teams, as well as medical teams reached 90. 11 thousand experts with more than 300 dogs came to Turkey while more than 100 countries offered assistance in one way or another. The widespread display of solidarity "belied the narrative that Turkey had no friends and that the rest of the world did nothing but plot against it," according to a retired ambassador Alper Coşkun.

In this respect, the response from Western countries deserves special attention, as they have been constantly targeted by Ankara. As the earthquake hit 11 provinces, nearly all European countries send disaster response teams to Turkey. It is important to recall the dilemma European capitals have found themselves in as Turkey distanced from democratic rule. On the one hand, they did not want to increase cooperation with Turkey which would have been perceived as tacit consent to democratic backsliding. Yet, doing nothing risked pushing Turkey out of the European orbit becoming a loose cannon. The twin earthquakes appear to have provided the alibi to reach out to Turkey. European Commission perhaps recalled that Turkey was a candidate country. The commissioner for enlargement, Oliver Varhelyi, who has visited Turkey only four times since taking his post in 2019, visited the disaster-hit region on February 22, accompanied. His visit was preceded by the European commissioner for crisis management who came to the earthquake zone on February 9.

The change of government after the spring elections will provide an opportunity to improve relations with the EU if the opposition would take the country back to a democratic track as it promised. If the current government were to win the elections, the earthquake cooperation can serve to at least put relations with the EU on a more constructive track.

Earthquake Diplomacy

Although the tension between Turkey and Greece before the twin earthquakes was on a rising trend, the deadly disaster revived peaceful rhetoric between the two nations. Greek government's assistance was crucial. But more importantly, while the Greek press has played a vital role in showing solidarity, many gestures from the Greek nation proved that the rapprochement following the 1999 Marmara earthquake has taken firm roots. Many mistakenly believe the rapprochement between Athens and Ankara started after the 1999 disaster, yet the decision to start dialogue was made before the earthquake and in fact commissions for that purpose had already been set up by the two capitals. But the earthquake had a "miraculous leap forward" effect on that process.

**Journalist and columnist*

Normalization with Armenia

There are certain similarities in terms of Turkish - Armenian relations. Yerevan did not lose time in reaching out to Ankara in the early hours of the earthquake to offer assistance. The borders which were closed in 1993 were open to allow the passage of trucks carrying humanitarian aid. The Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan came to Ankara to meet his Turkish counterpart. Yet, one should not expect a “miraculous leap” forward similar to the one that Turkish - Greek relations have witnessed in 1999. The main difference remains the involvement of the third party; Azerbaijan. After all, the border closed in 1993 following the capture by the Armenian military force of the Kelbajar region of Azerbaijan. But Mirzoyan’s visit as well as the Armenian humanitarian effort will certainly have a facilitating effect on the normalization process.

Israel was another country that did not lose time to offer very speedy and substantial assistance, which will certainly consolidate the efforts to put relations back on track. After nearly a decade of frozen relations, the two countries decided to speed up normalization by appointing their ambassadors in the last quarter of 2022. While government officials often obstructed the work of opposition parties, the coordination level between Israel and Turkish officials was remarkable. Although Turkey was busy with disaster response, its relative silence against steps taken by the Israeli far-right government against Palestinians was equally striking.

The earthquake speeded up the slow-paced normalization process with Egypt. The Egyptian administration provided aid to Turkey and Egyptian foreign minister visited the earthquake zone; Turkish Foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said that a new page is opened in the relations.

Diplomacy Speeding Up in the Middle East

The war and poverty-stricken Syria received another blow by the earthquake. The Arab world, on the other hand, found the opportunity to speed up normalization with Damascus. The Egyptian president called Assad for the first time after ten years. United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Jordan Foreign Ministers visited Damascus. Aside from the condolence message sent to Assad by the leader of the main opposition party CHP, the fact that there is no contact between Ankara and Damascus during the earthquake is obviously strange. Despite Turkey’s eagerness, it would not be a surprise that the UAE and Egypt joins Russia for the persuasion of Damascus, who feels more powerful with earthquake diplomacy.

On a final note, as put by Al Jazeera, the reputation cultivated by Ankara as a leading country providing humanitarian assistance to the four corners of the globe has been reflected in the international response.

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Earthquake and Diplomacy

*Ayla Jean Yackley**

The massive earthquake that struck southern Turkey on February 6, 2023, killed more than 52,000 people, destroyed a quarter of a million buildings and tore a deep wound in the nation's psyche. It has also upended its politics, striking just months before parliamentary and presidential elections that coincide with the centenary of the Turkish republic's founding.

After two decades in power, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan now faces his toughest electoral test in a vote he wants held on May 14. As the death toll mounts, so does anger over shortcomings in the state's rescue and relief efforts, with many blaming Erdogan's centralisation of power for the failures. Others point to the government's cultivation of a construction industry that makes up nearly a third of the economy but is riddled with substandard building practices, lax regulatory enforcement and legal loopholes that allowed it to erect so many structures that failed in the 7.8-magnitude earthquake.

Still, the domineering Erdogan has cut a strong figure in the quake's aftermath, promising a traumatised nation stability if he is re-elected and pushing the country to rapidly rebuild. In contrast, an alliance of opposition parties that has vowed to restore civil rights and economic prosperity has wobbled.

Just days before announcing Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the head of the main opposition Republican People's Party, would be its presidential candidate, the opposition bloc nearly fell apart. A last-minute power-sharing deal brought back the rightwing Good Party, its second-biggest partner led by Meral Aksener, a nationalist firebrand who has emerged as Erdogan's toughest critic. But the infighting revealed that a governing coalition of mixed ideologies will be fraught and may have further dampened lacklustre support for Kilicdaroglu, a social democrat.

Whoever wins will be tasked with the grim and gruelling recovery. The earthquake may lop off 1 percent off of Turkey's gross domestic product this year, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Damage from the devastating quake is expected to exceed \$25 billion, investment bank JPMorgan said.

Turkey's \$750 billion economy was already in the throes of a severe cost-of-living crisis as inflation hit a high of 85 percent last year and the lira currency lost almost a third of its value. Erdogan's unconventional economic policy of cutting interest rates while prices soar has shrunk the country's middle class and deterred foreign investors. Before the quake, Erdogan had begun priming the pump with populist spending measures, offering early retirement to millions, doubling the minimum wage, cutting mortgage rates and swelling the budget deficit.

An outpouring of international aid after the quake will prop up Turkey's vulnerable finances. The United States, the European Union, the World Bank and even Saudi Arabia are sending funds that total billions of dollars. This and other forms of help from abroad could reshape foreign policy. As Turks watched footage of rescue teams from Greece, Israel and Armenia saving dozens of people trapped in the ruins of their homes, animosity towards these conventional foes has dimmed.

Could the shared pain of the earthquake encourage reconciliation with Syria? Of the dead, more than 6,000 were in northern Syria. In the previous weeks, both sides had mooted a meeting between their presidents to end more than a decade of hostility over Turkey's support of Syrian opposition fighters.

** Journalist and columnist*

That outreach was part of Erdogan's broader pivot away from a confrontational stance towards the rest of the region and traditional allies in the West. Since 2021, he has worked to repair strained relations, end Turkey's diplomatic isolation and lure trade and investment to the crisis-hit economy.

Serious hurdles remain. Ankara continues to block Sweden's application to join NATO over accusations it supports Kurdish terrorists and members of the religious Gulen network, blamed for a 2016 coup attempt against Erdogan. Tensions remain with Washington over Turkey's close economic links with Russia, despite its opposition to the war in Ukraine, and persistent questions about fealty between Turkey and the rest of the military alliance.

But first, Turkey will hold its election. Staging one in a vast expanse of territory stricken by the earthquake will be formidably difficult. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. Polling places have been levelled. Tens of thousands of voters have died. Yet amid the terrible loss, Turks cannot afford to now lose their democracy, and so vote they must.



DPK Opinions on 2022

Taliban Back in Afghanistan

*Ayşegül Gökalp Kutlu**

When Taliban came back to power in Afghanistan in August 2021, its leaders vowed to honour women's rights within the norms of Islamic law, allow media freedoms, and offered full amnesty to those who worked for the U.S. and NATO-backed government. These remarks were interpreted as Taliban's acknowledgement of moderateness for international recognition. In its first year in power, however, Taliban's policies towards women were so oppressive that the UN experts on human rights warned it may even called a crime against humanity.

While 21% of government employees and 27% of MPs in the previous Afghan Parliament were women back in 2020, Taliban formed an all-male government in September 2021 arguing that there was no need for women in the cabinet, and it would be unfair to burden women with a task that they are not capable of. Next, Afghanistan Ministry of Women was transformed into the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and its female personnel were dismissed. In December 2021, the Ministry issued a guideline specifying that women must be accompanied by a *mahram*, or male chaperone, for journeys longer than 72km. In March 2022, Taliban ordered airlines to prevent women from traveling domestically and internationally without a *mahram*. In some parts of the country, driving schools were directed to stop teaching women how to drive and issuing them licenses, and they were barred from employing female driving instructors. In May 2022, a Taliban directive ordered women to wholly cover their faces, claiming that the best way of practicing hijab was not leaving the home. The directive deemed male family members responsible for women's proper hijab. In case women violated the directive, male family members could be detained; so, the aim was reinforcing men's control over women. In November 2022, women were barred from entering parks and funfairs, and then gyms and public baths.

The Independent Human Rights Commission was also abolished in May 2022, completely disabling Afghanistan's gender equality and women's rights mechanism. Women's shelters were shut down and victims of gender-based violence are deprived of all the support mechanisms. Most women's NGOs were closed, the remaining were rendered inoperable by threats, financial and administrative limitations. In December 2022, the Taliban banned women from working in all local and international non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan, on the pretext that the female personnel working there did not comply with the mandatory hijab rules.

From fall 2021 to the summer of 2022, the Taliban gradually made it impossible for women to participate in employment, first by reducing their salaries and then by laying them off. Except for those working in health and education, most women were told not to come to work and even to send a male relative instead. In some parts of the country, women are even prevented from working in the fields, the markets where they earned income by selling the weaving and embroidery they produced at home were closed, and especially the women who were solely responsible for their families' livelihoods were rendered incapable of making any money. In May 2022, female journalists were forced to cover their faces while broadcasting, and at the beginning of 2023, women were banned from working in shopping malls, female athletes from participating in sports competitions, and female patients from being examined by male doctors. Beauty parlours were closed.

The ongoing humanitarian and economic crisis also have a huge impact on the lives of women in Afghanistan. The

* Kocaeli University

incoming foreign aid to the aid-dependent Afghan economy was largely suspended after Taliban took control of the country. The USA froze 7 billion dollars of reserves of the Afghan Central Bank. Qualified civil servants in the previous government left the country or were forbidden to come to work after Taliban's take over, hence the state bureaucracy is stagnating. Lack of liquidity, rising food prices and drought, combined with bans on women's appearance in public spaces made it difficult for women and girls to access food. The distribution of food aid in mosques and through male humanitarian workers, combined with the remoteness of the distribution points prevented women from reaching the aid. Poverty has led to a significant increase in early and forced marriages of girls.

The right to education of women and girls was the issue that attracted the most attention in 2022. After seizing Kabul, the Taliban top management had said that they would not interfere with the education rights of women and girls. Women could receive university education in segregated classrooms and obeying the mandatory veiling rules, and that secondary schools, which had been closed for months, would be reopened on March 23, 2022. However, on the exact day of returning back to classes, the Taliban banned girls above 6th grade from going to school "until school uniforms suitable for Sharia and Afghan culture are determined". University entrance exams were held in October 2022 but despite being allowed to sit for university exams, in December 2022 the Ministry of Education banned women from pursuing university education.

The inconsistency in women's access to education revealed the split between pragmatists and hardliners within Taliban. It is known that pragmatists are in favour of a more moderate policy for diplomatic recognition and flow of foreign aid, but Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and his close circle are against modern education, especially the education of girls and women. Even though there were no open confrontations between the two groups, their differences produce different explanations and different practices on issues such as women's right to education. However, different practices and uncertainties cause women to live in fear. The society or male relatives put pressure on women even on issues that have not yet been regulated, or women automatically refrain themselves. Nevertheless, by protesting the bans on women's education, employment and against forced hijab, women did not accept to be silent victims of this regime.

In November, Akhundzada announced the initiation of punishments in line with sharia law. More than 100 men and women accused of theft, immorality or violating the rules of social conduct were publicly flogged afterwards, and the first public execution took place in December 2022.

To sum up, Taliban's efforts to get international recognition and aid fell short due to their violations of women's rights and failure to form an inclusive government. The conclusion to be drawn from the first year of Taliban rule has been the utter failure of peace talks (like the 2020 Doha Negotiations between the US and Taliban) to create lasting peace when women and women's issues are excluded from peacebuilding.

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2022 Iran Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom

*Tuğba Bayar**

The demonstrations stretched across Iran from Mahsa Amini's funeral on September 16. Amini died following her detention by the morality patrol finding her hijab improperly loose. Crowds calling for accountability and dissatisfaction with the unresponsiveness of the regime adopted the signature chant of the protests "Women, Life, Freedom". Women, but especially famous people cutting their hair in solidarity, amplified the media attention to the events. In support of Iranians standing up to authoritarian leadership, crowds rallied abroad, too, in various metropolises from Ottawa to Berlin, and Istanbul.

The demonstrators target the symbols of the regime such as knocking off the turbans of the clerics, demolishing the statues of regime figures as Qasim Soleimani, torching off the pictures of Ali Khamenei and Rohollah Khomeini. There is a clear voice for regime change from protestors chanting bold slogans of "death to dictator". Women lead the society against the patriarchal theocratic structure by casting off their mandatory headscarves in public as an act of civil disobedience.

According to the estimates of international human rights NGOs, 500 people were killed in nationwide protests, and 1/5 are children . Iranian government has been trying to stamp off the protests by charging some protesters for *moharebeh* which indicates waging war against God, state and their commands. The authorities started to carry out executions from December . It is reported that detained protestors are subjected to torture, sexual violence, physical and mental abuse by government agents.

Mahsa Amini movement is significantly different than the previous unrests in Iran in many ways. The Green Movement of 2009, well known with the slogan "where is my vote?" is one of the major political events of Iran accusing the regime for electoral manipulation. It embodied pro-democratic aspirations of the society and was a lasting movement, Tehran-centric and middle-class oriented.

As for the protests that started by the end of 2017 and spread over to 2018, they targeted issues such as the chronic corruption problem, the plummeting value of Iran's currency, ever increasing oil prices, the inflation, the drop in oil production, exchange rate instability, and ending of food subsidies. The protests have risen again in 2019. These demonstrations were led by the low-income classes. They were stamped out by disproportionate use of force recalled as the "bloody November". The authorities shut down the internet nationwide for one week, during which the death toll reached up to 1500. The socio-political ground of Amini movement scatters a broad base. Under the leadership of women and youth, various oppositional elements and fractions unite around a common objective. Compared to previous protests, Amini protests echo nationwide, and even to world-wide diaspora. It embraces all classes, ethnicities and sects. The demographic range is also all encompassing considering active participation of even school children, the youth, but also their parents. Although the first sparkle broke out as a reaction to mandatory hijab rule, the movement is an overall reaction to mismanagement of the Mollah administration in various fields. As can also be traced in the lyrics of the song *Baraye* (En. 'for') the anthem of the protests, there is a reaction to

* *Bilkent University.*

principal issues such as poverty, corruption, environmental degradation, drought, oppressive bans, migration problem.

Despite brutal crackdowns over protestors, the government did not succeed to suppress the events, and Iranian women do not give up standing up for their cause. In the contrary, there is an expanding support from various segments of the society: from petro-chemical workers to truck drivers, to school children, and to all-encompassing general strikes.

The USA, Canada, and the EU imposed sanctions on Iranian authorities and state organs, such as the morality police, responsible for deaths and various rights' abuses. Furthermore, the 54 members of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted a resolution on December 14 with immediate effect to remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women. The European satellite operator Eutelsat announced to take Iran's state-owned channels, i.e. Press TV, off air.

The Iranian leadership responded by counter-sanctions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran declared sanctions on Farsi language media outlets outside Iran. Authorities criminalized outlets such as VOA Persian, BBC Persian, Iran International, Manoto TV, Radio Farda and Kanal Yek besides the Charlie Hebdo magazine calling them "regime change media" for their coverage praising the demonstrations and for being vocal critics of brutal crackdowns. Iranian authorities blacklisted some diplomats to deny them issuing entry visa to the Islamic Republic, and to freeze their assets in Iran.

I maintain that the continuing negotiations over restoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of action (JCPOA) prevented the western, particularly the EU officials to implement effective sanctions over human rights abuses in Iran. In return, despite sanctions, Iran cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

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The International Dimensions of the 2022 Iran Protests

*Derya Göçer**

The death of Mahsa Jina Amini in Tehran on September 16, 2022 sparked an unprecedented wave of protests centering around women's struggle over many issues including but not limited to bodily autonomy in Iran. Amini was visiting Tehran from her hometown in the Kurdistan province and was deemed as not appropriately covered by the morality police. Her death increased the threat perception of Iranian women. It emphasized the brutal fact that they are not just repressed legally, economically, socially but also their very survival was under threat. So, women from different provinces, ethnic backgrounds, mostly young, used all available public space to protest. The demands that one can discern from their slogans as well slogans of different demographics, such as young men point to one direction. The protests aim for the end of the Islamic Republic's regime in Iran. They have expressed that demand from day one and that, along with the centrality of the women, makes them unique in the history of social movements under the Islamic Republic.

Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has its own particularities that are very relevant in understanding the protests of 2022. However, IRI has also several layers of interactions with the global and regional levels that are equally important in deciphering the timing, the content, and the future trajectory of the protests. Some of these interactions are inter-state while others are inter-societal. The first global dimension is the relationship *between diaspora and Iran*. One should be careful not to exaggerate the role that diaspora plays but nonetheless, it should be taken into consideration. As Iranian sociologist Asef Bayat [writes](#) there is a 'global Iran' that comes out of relations between "diverse people who are separated by geography but are very much together in feelings, in concerns and in dreams". Diaspora has been crucial over the years in translating the women struggle inside Iran to the international society and underlining the fact that women are not dormant in Iran.

The second dimension that relates to the global level has been the overall rise of the women's struggle across continents, mostly revolving around women's bodily autonomy, safety and freedom. This connection is not easy to show concrete evidence for, since the way movements learn from another are not always documented. However, two examples from countries with large Iranian diasporas are very relevant: women's fight for their reproductive rights in the US and women's struggle to fight against violence in Turkey. Members of Iranian diaspora in the US embody the combination of women's struggle in both countries such as [Mana Shooshtari](#). Shooshtari fights for reproductive rights in the US and against the hijab law in Iran. Iranian women struggle in turn [inspired](#) Afghan women, especially as Taliban restricted access of women to education and employment in Afghanistan. Youth has a special weight in the composition of protestors in Iran and they interact with the global youth across social media platforms, despite the heavy control of internet access in Iran, which may bolster this global dimension in the near future.

At the regional level, there are three dimensions that relate to the protests in Iran, with somewhat contradictory outcomes. Firstly, there is the impact of the last decade of Iran's proactive foreign policy towards the Middle East, particularly to Iraq, Syria and Yemen. This proactive foreign policy and increased military involvement (a) bolstered the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), which in turn gained unprecedented weight in the politics and economy of Iran, further deepening the nepotism and [corruption in the country](#). (b) The same

* Middle East Technical University

operations created an economic and social burden on Iranian society. The protests of 2017, 2018 and 2019 had slogans criticizing the operations abroad, and in 2022, the leader of the special force within IRGC, Qasem Suleimani's posters and statues were burned. Suleimani symbolized Iran's presence in its near abroad, especially after being killed by a US attack. (c) Iraq and Syria, the two countries that Iran interfered with and had military presence in, also symbolize a pessimistic future for the silent middle classes. Since the protests of 2022 are leaderless, decentralized and mostly coordinated through neighborhood grassroots communities, there is no clear plan of what Iran would look like should the protestors succeed in toppling down the regime. Iran's own interference in the region is a testament to the fact that protests may be followed by violent episodes, civil wars and foreign power intervention. Commonly phrased as 'Syrianization' by the end of 2022, such a possibility is keeping urban, middle-aged members of the middle classes at home. This can be seen in the lack of massive crowds in the streets. So, the foreign policy and proactive military attitude of Iran in the last ten years both gives fuel to the anger of protestors and is related to the fear of Syrianization.

One final dimension of the global influences has been the international community. The international community, especially in November and December 2022, has raised its voice against the repression of the protestors fighting for women's rights in Iran. Most notable outcome has been the dismissal of Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) following a vote of the members of the commission as well as the initiation of a fact-finding mission within UN over the violence against protestors. Several countries have increased their sanctions against Iran, targeting members of the police, IRGC and judiciary specifically.

Very aptly expressed in Watermülder's GIGA report on women's rights, "the not uncontroversial "#Me too" debate has shown that even the so-called developed countries and the Western world (especially in the area of culture!) are not at all in the clear when it comes to violence against women (Watermülder 2020, 2). So, transnational solidarity with Iranian women is connected to the larger solidarity net that women across the globe need in 2023 and beyond.

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Geopolitics of 'Traditional Values' in the Context of Russia

*Gökten Doğangün**

After the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, once again a polarized order has prevailed the relations among the states, replacing the post-Cold War focus on international cooperation and solidarity. In the newly emerging bi-polar system, Russia's perception of ontological security revolves around protecting strengthening spiritual and moral values. Putin deploys these values to protect the national sovereignty and security of Russia in the geopolitical order that the USA wants to shape unilaterally.

In the process leading up to the invasion of Ukraine, Western countries are accused not only of expanding towards Russia's western borders, but also of trying to destroy Russia's traditional values. The invasion of Ukraine is justified as a struggle against the imposition of foreign values by the Western powers that are alien to human nature, cause moral collapse and aim to unsettle the Russian people from the inside, thereby adding a moral and cultural dimension to the war. The support of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill helped Putin to portray the Ukrainian invasion as a "holy war". According to this narrative, the reason for the 'special military intervention' is to protect traditional values that weaken with the advent of freedom, excessive consumption and LGBTQI+ rights. The ultimate goal is to save Ukraine from subordination to the 'immoral West'.

The content of traditional values, built on the tripartite of national authenticity, patriotism and anti-Westernism, is crystallized by the rejection of gender equality, feminism and LGBTQI+ rights. As such, the norms and values regarding gender identity and roles become a part and parcel of Russia's geopolitical power struggle. Against the background of the polarization of the international arena over gender politics, Putin positions Russia as the 'most' masculine actor, uncorrupted against the decayed, feminine and perverted West. This categorization becomes particularly manifested in the attitude towards LGBTQI+ rights. The concept of 'Gayropa', which corresponds to the portrayal of the EU around 'abnormal' gender norms, attests to the degeneration and perversion of Europe. The steps to criminalize homosexuality in Russia draw geopolitical boundaries between "us" and "the other" against the backdrop of the increasing visibility of homosexuality and the expansion of legal advances (marriage, protection against violence, adoption rights) in the West. The existential enemy, which has been redefined in the axis of changing national and international balances with the end of the Cold War, is no longer the capitalist West and Nazism as the enemy of the working class but liberals, American agents, and LGBTQI+ advocates (Engström 2017).

The opposition to gender equality constitutes the basis of Russia's narrative that defines the 'other' with reference to religious, traditional and cultural values. The 'natural/normal' gender order has been disappearing and the West has been falling victim to sexual immorality as a result of the legalization of same-sex marriage, the strengthening of feminism and the disintegration of the traditional family while Russia is envisioned as an actor trying to popularize a system of values based on traditional family, roles and identities. With this narrative, Putin formulates the struggle against the unipolar world through Ukraine as a geopolitical positioning that corresponds to the opposition of 'good' and 'bad' values. While Russia regains its masculine power, which was weakened by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the 'other', that is, the Western countries, become feminized, lose their masculinity and thus their right to be the true representative of Christian values. Thus, Putin is trying to voice the

* Middle East Technical University, Northern Cyprus Campus

feelings of anti-imperialists, leftists and conservatives around the world and gain their support. Russia is trying to secure support especially from the leaders in countries where the far right is on the rise, on the one hand, and cooperates with civil societal organizations that defend traditional values, on the other hand. Therefore, the understanding of democracy based on national sovereignty and traditional values, offered by Putin as an alternative to the Western model, is the product of a political struggle over the conception of modernity. Russia's undertaking a mission of defending and protecting traditional values on a global scale cannot be separated from the geopolitical role and position it has chosen to adopt in the new world order on the brink of the second Cold War.

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Mass Movement of Ukrainian Refugees Revealing Identity Politics within the EU

*Müge Dalkıran & Başak Kale**

Russia's attack on Ukraine's Donbas region on February 24, 2022 has generated a mass movement of refugees from Ukraine to the neighbouring countries including EU member states. The [UNHCR figures](#) demonstrates that in addition to the nearly [6 million people becoming internally displaced people](#) within Ukraine a total of 7,896,825 Ukrainians became refugees since the beginning of this war. The EU's and its member states' immediate demonstration of solidarity with the Ukrainian refugees was a diversion from the previous responses to former refugee movements such as in the summer 2015. Ongoing push-backs against other nationalities fleeing wars and persecutions by the EU member states generates a highly political discussion on the identity politics in the EU's asylum and migration policies. This discussion highlights if there is an underlying preference of protection for refugees generated within the European continent by European root causes.

The preference of European refugees became more visible when Visegrad countries, such as Poland and Slovakia which are known with their apparent anti-refugee sentiments, have surprisingly welcomed Ukrainian refugees. As a bordering country to Ukraine, Poland experienced a mass movement immediately after the Russian attacks and reacted with [opening its borders](#). Following these entries of Ukrainian refugees to various EU countries, the European Commission quickly responded by a proposal to activate [the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in the last 20 years](#). The proposal was accepted by the Council on March 4, 2022 giving temporary protection [status](#) to the citizens of Ukraine who fled the war, stateless people living in Ukraine, third-country nationals benefiting from international protection or an equivalent national protection program, and persons who had a residence permit in Ukraine before the war and could not return safely to their home country. [More than 4 million people](#) benefited from the temporary protection status in various EU member states, particularly in Poland and Germany. Although temporary protection was foreseen to be within a limited time period such as one year after its adoption, the European Commission decided on October 10, 2022 to [extend the temporary protection until March 2024](#). Temporary protection provides rights to its holders such as a residence permit, work permit, self-employment, access to health care and education. In order to ensure a rapid and smooth social and economic integration process [within the member states a series of measures](#) have also been introduced for temporary protection holders. These measures include labour market integration schemes such as the EU Talent Pool and the Commission's guidance for access to the labour market, vocational education and adult learning.

The EU's ability to act faster and more effectively compared to the previous mass displacements through a structured protection system involving rapid labour market integration actions could be seen as a positive development. Likewise, seeing that the governments of Poland, Austria and Slovenia, which are also known for their anti-refugee policies, opening their borders to Ukrainian refugees and welcoming the newcomers with social integration measures could be considered as humanitarian and noble acts. However, these acts also bring a discussion of [racial-based double standards](#) of the EU and EU member states. These actions were not observed neither during the Arab Spring mass movements nor during the Syrian civil war. Even in the case of Ukrainian

** Austrian Institute for International Affairs and İstanbul Kültür University,
Middle East Technical University*

refugees, if these refugees were from different ethnic groups such as Roma community, discrimination are still being recorded.

According to the survey conducted by the Observatory for Public Attitudes to Migration (OPAM) at the European University Institute (EUI), ethnic, cultural and socio-demographic characteristics were revealed as significant factors for the ease of acceptance of Ukrainian refugees in comparison to the Syrian refugees in eight host countries in the EU (Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia). Another factor for the ease of acceptance could be considered as the gender perspective. Ninety percent of Ukrainian refugee population is consisted of women and children due to the ban on men aged 18-60 to exit Ukraine. This means the composition of Ukrainian refugees mainly to be women and children.

The war in Ukraine and the mass movement of refugees from the war zones to the EU raise the debate on how EU's asylum and international protection policies are influenced by identity politics. At the core of this debate lies the questions of "preferable refugees" in terms of gender, age and race. Whether an unofficial distinction between Christian European women and Muslim Middle Eastern Men has been made in accepting and integrating refugees or temporary protection holders has yet to be seen. However, it is clear that the EU and its member states have experienced challenges to respect and fully implement the core principles of refugee law and the EU's own *acquis communautaire*. In this sense, the main questions in these discussions remain to be whether there will be a change in the attitudes of the countries that host a large number of Ukrainian refugees and how this situation will affect the other groups under protection within the EU.

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The European Union's Response to the War in Ukraine and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

*Gökçen Yavaş**

Russia launched a military attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022, shortly after it had built up troops near Ukraine's eastern border, in particular in the last months of 2021 and had recognized Donetsk and Luhansk as independent territories on 21 February 2022. The leading EU institutions and the Member States of the EU condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence as an initial response to the war. At the European Council meeting held on 24 February, the Member States of the EU openly announced that "Russia's attack violated international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter". The Union also stated that "Russia will suffer the consequences of its aggressive action targeting human life."

One of the most focal points of the EU's response to the war in Ukraine is the EU's approach and practices to the gendered dimensions of security, in particular, within the framework of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, which was first adopted by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. In this context, the EU has developed a gender-sensitive policy approach to conflicts since 2018, when it published the Strategy for the WPS Agenda. In addition, the Union also announced the EU Action Plan for the WPS between 2019 and 2024 in 2019. Thus, the EU has more concretely adopted the four-pillar approach of the WPS Agenda, classified as "participation, conflict prevention, protection and assistance, and recovery" almost for five years. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the EU has not produced adequate policies yet in the current war conditions.

In particular, on the refugee issue, the EU first acted in line with the WPS Agenda by taking an important decision about the Temporary Protection Directive on 5 May 2022. In this regard, the European Parliament called on the Commission to guarantee the full implementation of the TPD, which covers health care, childcare, and labour market access so that women refugees from Ukraine can enjoy their rights in Europe. Last year, the Member States of the EU also took concrete action by carrying out these directive provisions, which have had significant effects, particularly, on women and children.

As another initiative, the EU significantly stressed the need for humanitarian intervention based on the findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine. in Council Conclusions of 14 November 2022, The EU has also emphasized its support to Ukraine for the implementation of the WPS 2021-2025 National Action Plan. Relevantly, EUAM Ukraine is hence expected to contribute to the development of the gender perspective considerably, in particular, starting in 2019.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the EU has responded to the invasion by taking restrictive measures against Russia and providing Ukraine with political, financial, humanitarian, logistical, and military assistance. Undoubtedly, besides the EU's economic, energy, and security-based concerns, humanitarian issues are among the priority policy areas of the Union. This is because civilians are mostly and directly affected by armed conflicts. Ongoing sexual and gender-based violence in Ukraine and the fact that 90% of refugees from Ukraine are women and children entirely back this argument.

In particular, with the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Union has sought to gradually expand

* Kocaeli University

the restrictive measures it has imposed on Russia so far. The restrictive measures implemented by the EU against Russia are as follows: Suspension of the broadcasting activities of Russian cable and satellite regulations within the borders of the EU; suspension of cooperation programmes in science, technology, and research; restrictions on Russia's access to EU capital markets; prohibition of transactions on Russian banks removing them from the SWIFT application; closure of EU airspace to Russian aircraft; asset freeze and travel ban for thousands of individuals and hundreds of entities because of their action in Russian war of aggression; restriction of maritime services such as shipping for the related persons; restrictions on Russia's oil and gold export to EU countries; sanctions imposed on intellectual property rights; export controls and restrictions for dual-use goods drone engines to Russia and export to any third countries.

The EU has supported Ukraine through several political, economic, humanitarian, and military assistance programmes. The European Commission has for the first time activated the Temporary Protection Directive, which it adopted in 2001, since March 2022. It currently provides refugees with “temporary protection, residence permits, and access to education and job market” within the EU. The Union has allocated over €19.7 billion for financial and emergency aid, crisis response, and humanitarian and military assistance, which is about €3.1 billion to support Ukraine through the European Peace Facility. On the other hand, the EU Advisory Mission Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), which has been operating since 2014 to support civil security sector reform, has also taken on new tasks such as facilitating the passage of refugees into neighbouring countries and ensuring the transportation of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. In addition, the EU, which has frequently operated its “conflict resolution mechanism through integration”, has followed a similar path for Ukraine: Following Ukraine's application for EU membership on 28 February 2022, the European Council decided to declare Ukraine (and Moldova) a candidate state for EU membership on 23 June. Recently, on 3 February 2023 the EU held an EU-Ukraine Summit meeting in Kyiv. At the 24th meeting of the EU with Ukraine, the Union thus reiterated its support for Ukraine addressing the issues including peace initiatives, reconstruction, energy and Ukraine's accession to the EU.

In conclusion, although the EU responded to Russia's attack on Ukraine in a short time, it has not yet implemented adequate policies to ensure peace, considering that the war is still ongoing. It should also be noted that while some Member States of the EU, including Sweden, France, Spain, and Germany, have adopted the Feminist Foreign Policy approach, the EU has not developed such a policy yet, as an actor. Therefore, the EU needs to make both domestic and foreign policy mechanisms more effective and develop much more gender-sensitive policies in the violent environment, in particular, by promoting women's equal participation in the decision-making processes.

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Global Women, Peace and Security Agenda in 2022

*Burcu Özdemir Sarıgil **

On 20 October 2022, the United Nations Security Council convened its annual Open [Debate](#) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) with the purpose of reviewing the progress and gaps of the agenda.[†] In 2022, the WPS Open Debate truly became a global forum. Alongside some 80 UN member states, the representatives of regional organizations, the NGO Working Group on WPS, the UN Secretary-General, and the UN Women participated, provided evidence from various parts of the world, and discussed the current situation. The theme of the 2022 Open Debate was “Strengthening Women’s Resilience and Leadership as a Path to Peace in Regions Plagued by Armed Conflicts”. The theme underlined the importance of women’s resilience and leadership in times of severe global crisis, conflicts, and uncertainty as in the instances of Afghanistan, Ukraine, Iran.

The 2022 Open Debate started with the presentation of the UN Secretary-General’s 2022 [report](#) on WPS, which highlighted a number of severe setbacks in progress during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The report extensively elaborated on the deteriorating human security of women in conflict-affected countries including Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso, Syria, Congo, Lebanon, Myanmar, and Ukraine. The meaningful representation of women in peace processes and in politics was another concern. It was spotlighted, for instance, that in 2021 the percentage of women in the UN-led peace processes and negotiations was 19%—down from 23% in 2020. Moreover, while global military spending has reached USD 2.1 trillion, the funding for women human rights defenders and civil society in crisis and conflict settings decreased sharply. The Secretary-General’s report also underlined the attacks against women human rights defenders and the necessity to provide them protection alongside the women and girls in conflict-affected countries.

During the ensuing day-long WPS open [debate](#), commitments to the WPS agenda were refreshed and the courage of women in crisis and conflict areas was praised. Importantly, the leading transnational advocacy network, the NGO [working](#) group on WPS, has become a hub and instrumental in accentuating women’s voices at UN Security Council. On the other hand, many of the speakers emphasized the alarming increase in gender-based violence, the use of rape as a war weapon, displacement, and poverty in conflict-affected countries and called for concrete action to build the world back better in the post COVID-19 period.

The WPS [Index](#) 2021/2022 also provides us with global scale data to track progress and gaps. The Index was developed by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security ([GIWPS](#)) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo ([PRIO](#)). The 2021/2022 Index ranks 170 countries along three dimensions of women’s empowerment – inclusion, injustice, and security. The 2021/2022 WPS Index reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic multiplied the inequalities and discrimination against women and hit severely two of the three key dimensions of the Index-inclusion and security. Looking at the [details](#) of the country rankings, the ten worst performers or ten of the bottom countries are all fragile states in Asia and Africa. Taliban regime’s Afghanistan was the worst country for women

** Bilkent University*

[†] On 20 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted the Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). The UNSC Resolution 1325 and subsequent 9 Resolutions have established the normative framework of the global WPS agenda. With these landmark Resolutions, the international community recognized that gender matters in peace and conflict contexts and committed to take action in four core pillars of the agenda: prevention, protection, participation, relief and recovery.

and it was followed by Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq, South Sudan, Chad, DR Congo, Sudan, and Sierra Leone. In the WPS Index, the ranking of Turkey is 106 (out of 170 countries). At the other end of the spectrum, the ten best performer countries are all developed western countries, namely Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands.

2022 was also the year of some encouraging developments. In the face of entrenched challenges, the National Action Plans ([NAPs](#)) continue to be a critical tool for countries to implement and advance the WPS agenda in their domestic and foreign policy. The good news is as of December 2022, the number of countries that committed to the WPS agenda has reached 104. Turkey has not been among these countries yet. In 2020, Latvia, Slovakia, Malta, Sudan, Cyprus, and Azerbaijan adopted their first NAPs and in 2021 they were followed by Mexico, United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Uruguay, Malawi, and Peru. The WPS countries that adopted their first NAPs in 2022 are Kazakhstan and Morocco.

In 2022, the WPS agenda was also advanced by regional and sub-regional organizations. Twelve regional and sub-regional [organizations](#) (e.g., European Union, African Union, ECOWAS, Southern African Development Community, Great Lakes Region, ECCAS, NATO, Pacific Region, League of Arab States) have already developed their action plans or strategies on WPS. These organizations have continued to encourage their member states to implement the agenda. Another important development of the year 2022 occurred in Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Nations ([ASEAN](#)) adopted its first comprehensive WPS action plan. In sum, the developments in 2022 one more time proved that fulfilling the goals of the WPS agenda is an uphill struggle and requires hope, resilience, and persistent efforts and advocacy.

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Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

*Aslihan Turan**

Neither R2P nor WPS are fully internationalized norms. Although both documents provide international society with a guideline on how to prevent, respond and stop mass atrocities, the international community is still under the control of conventional patriarchal concepts. Sovereignty, state security, and hard power are much more pronounced by male state persons and diplomats, whereas an emphasis on human rights and women's presence in atrocity prevention are still less likely to influence the course of international relations. Patriarchal practices, at national and international levels, come into scene fiercely during conflictual times which make gendered R2P procedures more and more important. Adopting a gender lens would provide a new perspective for the inclusion of women in early warning systems, reconciliation talks, special commissions to respond to humanitarian tragedies and will also extend their scope.

The R2P report does not have an explicit mention on women and conflict related sexual violence. This is framed within war crimes, specifically since the adoption of the Resolution 1820 by the UN Security Council in 2008 that recognized sexual violence as a war crime and a threat to collective security. However, this approach limits the place of women into being the victims of mass atrocity crimes and also the scope of the R2P to sexual crimes. To extend the framework of the R2P, United Nations prepared a report to link the Women, Peace and Security Agenda with the R2P to create a best practice of both. The 12th Report of the UN Secretary General in 2020, "Prioritizing prevention and strengthening response: Women and the responsibility to protect," emphasized the gender aspect of mass atrocity crimes prevention, aimed to fill the gap in gendered approach of R2P. This attempt to incorporate a gender perspective into R2P has the objective to give women an equal and meaningful role into prevention and negotiation processes in responding to mass atrocity crimes, as an agent of change. In this sense, the 12th Report focused on the "vital role of women in prevention and protection" for a "holistic atrocity prevention" by having women equally and meaningfully on board. The need for a gendered-R2P was justified with the view on the strength that women would provide legitimacy and representativeness, along with sustainability of the prevention and protection processes.

Recent examples of Syria, Iran, Ukraine or Afghanistan reminded the international society that women are not only the "victims" of wars and conflicts. They join armed forces to fight for their countries, they protest unlawful acts and stand against states to defend their rights. Women are actively at the center of all politics and all transformations, so the need to include women, with equal opportunities and roles, in the early warning of atrocities and in their prevention is of significant importance. The NGOs Open letter addressed to the UN Security Council points out that escalating and widespread violence and conflicts all around the world resulted in the displacement of civilian people, mostly women, violation of their rights in Ukraine; a rise of gendered crises, a militarized masculinity in Afghanistan; suffering from sexual violence in Ethiopia, in Myanmar; assassination of women leaders in Columbia... All these examples demonstrate the necessity and the urgency to ensuring equal and meaningful participation of women in peace and security making / building and the establishment of mechanisms to assure women's rights and gender equality.

* *Barcelona Open University*

The Commission of inquiry in Syria and also the Special Rapporteur in Myanmar pointed out that gender violence was a part of mass atrocity crimes and this should be dealt within R2P strategies. When we look at the latest Human Rights Council resolutions, we see that violence against women is one of the main concerns and that special procedures are mostly led by women, but international mechanisms need a clearer gender focus and mechanisms in order to have a transformative impact on structures at both national and international levels. Even though NATO was engaged with WPS, it has failed to operationalize WPS policy in the field with Gender Advisors that could be deployed within NATO forces. During 2022, although crises and conflicts continued to violate international law and human rights, neither the Responsibility to Protect, nor the WPS had found a decent place within UN resolutions. The R2P was referred by only 13 times in 2022, all emphasizing the “responsibility of the state to protect their own populations...”, thus not taking the responsibility as international community.

In the summer of 2022, the UN General Assembly announced the 24th of June to be ‘the International Day of Women in Diplomacy Day’, declaring “women’s participation in diplomacy crucial to achieving peace and security” (A/RES/76/269). A consciousness on the place and role of women within peace negotiations or atrocity prevention has been born and there are undeniable developments. However, institutional mechanisms through which policymakers and actors act in the field still do not have a framework on how to include women in atrocity prevention and to design a gendered R2P. In their 10th Annual Meeting, the Global Network of R2P Focal Points emphasized the importance of a holistic response in preventing atrocity crimes by aligning R2P with WPS and establishing close cooperation (R2P Focal Points Meeting).

Nevertheless, underrepresentation of women in diplomacy and international negotiations in Syria, Ukraine, Central African Republic or in Democratic Republic of Congo continues as well as the patriarchic approaches to their advancement. The UN Security Council report also recognized that attacks aiming at silencing women leaders and women human rights defenders and the perpetrators are actually and unfortunately states actors themselves. In these circumstances, civil society did not receive sufficient support in responding the intimidations and reprisals that women are facing. To evaluate the situations in Somalia, Afghanistan and Yemen, there had been a high number of meetings held, covering a WPS approach though political and material support are not available for the women’s rights defenders, yet.

The institutionalization of a gendered R2P through the WPS guidelines and the 12th Report will build a strong international mechanism in the prevention and responding to mass atrocity crimes, so that from the early warning practices to peacebuilding negotiations, women will have an equal participation. Civilian activism, along with the efforts of international civil organizations, plays a crucial role in the transformation of patriarchal international society into a one that has a gendered lens in its scope and mechanisms.

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The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN)

*Esra Dilek**

While the inclusion of women in peace processes has seen an upwards trend in recent years, women's undertaking of official mediation roles remains limited. Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators, and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes around the world. The year 2022 was a productive one for women's mediation networking and capacity building activities in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), which was established as a regional network in 2017, organized monthly teatime meetings throughout 2022 that were later transformed into country-specific meetings, focusing on Syria, Afghanistan, and Morocco. In March 2022, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) participated in an event organized by NATO on Women Mediators and Peacebuilders in the MENA region. In April, the MWMN organized a public webinar on 'Syria: A Gender Perspective on the Status of the Political Process', addressing the role of women in developing durable solutions to the conflict. In October, the network promoted the panel 'Taking Forward Women's Meaningful Inclusion in Peace Making' within the framework of the EU Community of Practice 2022 on Peace Mediation. More recently, in December 2022 the MWMN joined the MED Dialogues- annual high-level initiative promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation- as speakers and experts in peace mediation. Meanwhile, during 2022 the Turkey Antenna of MWMN, which was established in 2019, conducted local level research on the work of women's cooperatives in Turkey with a visit to 14 cities in the seven geographic areas. The research report, which will be forthcoming in early 2023, assesses the role of women's cooperatives in strengthening women's roles in their local communities.

Women's participation in peace processes as negotiators, mediators, and/or signatories increases the likelihood of peace duration (O'Reilly et al. 2015). However, research has shown that women's direct inclusion in peace negotiation processes does not *per se* increase the likelihood that more peace agreements are signed and implemented (Paffenholz 2016). *Meaningful* inclusion is more important than the number of inclusion of women in such processes. Meaningful inclusion widely refers to participation that can shape the content of efforts to address a conflict and have a voice in decision making processes.

Mediation- a process whereby a third party assists parties in a dispute to prevent, manage, or resolve a conflict by helping them develop mutually acceptable agreements- is one of the most important roles that constitute an avenue for meaningful inclusion. Mediators contribute actively to solving disputes at the local, national, and international levels. Mediation strategies that systematically include women are more likely to generate national ownership and support for a negotiated settlement and lead to sustainable peace. Since 2017, regional networks made up of women mediators have been actively pursuing multi-track approaches to women's participation in peace negotiations by supporting women's meaningful participation in formal processes and developing local level capacities for conflict prevention.

As of 2022, the network is composed of 26 countries that are connected to the Mediterranean region through geographical and/or cultural ties. The MWMN aims at fulfilling the need to increase the number of women in peacemaking efforts and at facilitating the appointment of high-level women mediators at local and

* Istanbul Policy Center

international levels. The MWMN is part of the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediators Networks, which is a collective of voices demanding policy and decision-makers to implement the UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions and create meaningful spaces for women to influence peace and security around the world. The establishment of the MWMN aimed at reducing a networking capacity gap in the Mediterranean area. The MWMN engages in a wide range of activities such as capacity building, advocacy and outreach, experience sharing, and local initiatives.

Networks such as the MWMN constitute spaces for the active involvement of women in mediation through networking, experience sharing, and capacity building opportunities. Considering that women constituted, on average, 11 percent of mediators in peace processes around the world over the last five years and six percent of mediators during 1992-2019, one might say that there is still slow progress towards achieving meaningful participation of women on an equal basis. Regional women's networks aim to address this gap. They constitute spaces for meaningful activity, strengthening women's presence in peacebuilding processes at the local, national, and international levels. Considering developments in the Mediterranean region in the recent years, including ongoing conflicts in Syria, Libya, long-term disputes and societal transformation in countries such as Morocco and Egypt, initiatives strengthening women's societal positions become all the more important.

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ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security

*Ayşegül Gökalp Kutlu**

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (RPA) is finally launched on December 5th, 2022. ASEAN moved steadily in the last decade towards the adoption of a regional plan of action to translate the objectives of the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into concrete regional strategies and actions. The Philippines and Indonesia adopted their first National Action Plans (NAP) in 2010 and 2014 and second NAPs in 2017 and 2021 respectively. The Philippines also became the first country in the region to localize the WPS agenda when the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's Regional Action Plan on WPS was adopted in 2020.

There has not been interstate conflict among ASEAN members since 1967, however the region has experienced severe turmoil due to armed intrastate conflicts and climate-induced disasters. The south-Thailand insurgency, the Rohingya conflict and instability after the coup d'état in Myanmar were still not resolved as of 2022, while all countries in the region feel the impact of climate change, natural disasters and transnational air pollution. Cybersecurity is also a concern in the region, given that more than half of ASEAN population is below 30 years-old, and South-east Asians spend more time on the mobile internet than anyone else in the world. All these traditional and non-traditional security concerns need to be evaluated when assessing the ASEAN RPA.

In terms of the participation pillar of WPS, the ASEAN RPA aims to increase the participation of women in all levels of decision making and in peace processes. In national parliaments, women's average representation in the region is about 20%, while the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos are above the global average of 25,5%. In 2022, Sara Duterte was elected vice-president in the Philippines, while in Myanmar the democratically elected Aung San Suu Kyi was deposed with a coup d'état last year and sentenced to a total of 33 years in prison as of December 30, 2022. With regards to women's participation in peacekeeping operations, ASEAN member states contribute a total of 387 female peacekeepers out of 4,322 to UN peacekeeping missions. Peace negotiations to end conflicts in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi and Maluku regions in early 2000s included female negotiators from Muslim and Christian communities while the Philippine government's chief negotiator to end the decades long conflict with Moro Islamic Liberation Front was a woman, Prof. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, and almost half of the negotiating team were women. Despite good examples, seven out of ten ASEAN member states still lack any official means to include gender in discussions of peace and security.

In terms of the prevention pillar, the ASEAN RPA focuses on conflict, violence and disaster prevention, cybersecurity threats, climate change and gender responsive early warning mechanisms. The RPA has a specific focus on cybersecurity, since online recruitment is a widely used method by violent extremist organizations, and high internet usage in the region may trigger online sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls.

In terms of the protection pillar, the ASEAN RPA focuses on the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence. Nevertheless, high levels of poverty, income inequality and corruption are adding up to women's insecurity. The Golden Triangle, which is located in the intersection of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos, is a major hub for illegal border trade and human trafficking, including sex-trafficking. Local and migrant women in

* Kocaeli University

the region are trafficked, forced into prostitution, unfree labour or forced surrogacy despite (or because of the ineffectiveness of) counter-measures taken by states. Thailand's existing 1996 Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act still punishes sex-workers instead of those who are complicit in sex-trafficking. While the region is also popular in terms of the global surrogacy industry, restrictions in Thailand and Cambodia and the absence of regulation on the issue in Laos resulted in cases of the criminalization and abandonment of surrogate mothers.

The region feels the impact of climate change and natural disasters; hence the relief and recovery pillar of the ASEAN RPA specifically focuses on preparing risk management strategies that address the needs of women and girls, acknowledging that vulnerability to the impact of disasters intensifies with gender inequality. The RPA also highlights the COVID-19 pandemic as a factor increasing the risks for women and girls in humanitarian crisis and conflict-affected environments. While several ASEAN meetings and summits held in 2020 and 2021 highlighted women's roles and contributions during the pandemic, women were underrepresented in COVID-19 task forces of the member states and three countries had no women representatives in their task forces at all. A shortcoming of the RPA in terms of relief and recovery is its non-inclusion of the needs of refugee women. The Rohingya conflict and the military takeover in Myanmar resulted in 1.4 million displaced people; however, the word 'refugee' appears only once in the whole text and only in relation to the equipment and training of the security sector.

The ASEAN RPA also includes an Implementation, Coordination, Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation matrix. UN Women identifies monitoring and evaluation as a criterion for a high impact Action Plan, hence the continuous reporting, collecting of gender-segregated data, gender-responsive budgeting and localization of the WPS indicated in this section of the ASEAN RPA are important in turning it into a high impact RPA.

To sum up, in Southeast Asia, the WPS agenda needs to focus not only on women's participation in politics, peace and electoral processes, prevention of violent extremism, transnational crime, or communal conflicts but also on climate-change, natural disasters, migration, displacement, health pandemics and cybersecurity. The ASEAN RPA is a big step forward in bringing together ASEAN, member states' governments and civil society initiatives in the region adopting an inclusive approach towards gender equality in the region.

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Key Takeaways from COP27 Climate Conference

*Umay Yılmaz**

27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is held between 6-18 November 2022. The conference brought together approximately forty thousand representatives from countries around the world to review the progress of Convention requirements and negotiate obligations and actions to address climate crisis.

The primary goal of the COP meetings is to review nations' progress in dealing with climate change, assess the implementation of ongoing agreements, and negotiate new alternatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. COP meetings are crucial because they provide a forum for countries to come and work together to solve global climate crisis. Climate change is a global issue that requires a coordinated and collaborative response from all countries, and the COP meetings are the only mechanism in place for the need. Also, countries discuss and negotiate new ways to accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy during COP meetings.

COP27 was held in the shadow of the Russia - Ukraine war, global inflation, food crisis, energy crisis, post-pandemic effects and climate based natural disasters – such as forest fires, floods and other extreme weather conditions. Because of that, it is not possible to say that COP27 met the expectations. The most important progress of the conference was, after a long and challenging negotiations, it is agreed to establish a fund for vulnerable countries that have negatively affected by the climate change. This is a significant progress since the financial support for loss and damage caused by climate change has not considered even as an agenda item over the past years. The form of the fund who will pay what and to whom will be discussed and concluded in COP28. COP27 was a disappointment for the other areas of the Convention requirements especially for the nationally determined contributions and phasing out from fossil fuels. A proposal to phase out from coal could not come to conclusion.

In the case of Turkey, Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Mr. Murat Kurum announced Turkey's revised nationally determined contribution at the Leaders' Summit at COP27. As announced at the COP27, until 2030 Turkey's emission reduction target will be 41 percent reduction from increase. This target was announced as 21 percent in the past. The emission peak year is determined as 2038.

In conclusion, anthropogenic climate change is the most important, complex and dynamic threat the world has ever experienced. We are already observing the negative effects of the climate crisis. As it became evident once again at COP27, nations and leaders need to take concrete steps rather than revising targets and promises to prevent the destructive effects of the climate change.

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Women Leadership and Climate Mitigation Hafifletme

*Ebru Canan-Sokullu, Aslı Çalım & Dize Doğan**

In May 2022, women-led Finnish parliament that approved the new [Climate Change Act](#) that will replace the Climate Change Act of 2015, under the leadership of Sanna Marin of the Social Democratic Party. With this new act, Finland will make sure that it reaches carbon neutrality by 2035. The Climate Change Act establishes new provisions for carbon neutrality, which means that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that a state produces equals to the amount they are removing from the atmosphere. The Finnish Act also acknowledges the threats that the climate change poses for the livelihoods of the Sámi people and includes the Sámi people during the decision-making process for the changing climate change policy plans.

Probably the most important climate event of the year, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) also underlined the importance of a gender action plan, yet there were fewer women in negotiation teams and as heads of state during the Conference.

Why and how is women's leadership important for climate change? Climate crisis has become an increasingly alarming for international community, societies, and individuals and it requires multifaceted and multi-layered methodologies of governance. Though anthropogenic climate change dates back to 300 years ago, the global acknowledgement of the climate change has only recently been brought about with the first World Climate Conference in 1979. The mainstreaming of climate change has arguably been even a more recent topic in the global arena. Environmental protection has been regarded as an essential pillar of sustainable development and its sufficient awareness is crucial for all levels of decision makers for economic and social development to be achieved.

There are myriad direct or indirect impacts of climate change such as rising sea levels, rising temperatures, extreme weather events, lack of water and food security, resource depletion, and environmental degradation each of which, yet, does not yield the same effects on societies. Climate change has been correlated with disproportionate effects on women and girls, especially in the Global South. It is observed that disproportionality is rather a result of gender roles and inequality. Among imposed roles on women in patriarchal societies is, for instance, basic housework. When the supply of materials for basic housework is interrupted due to climate problems, it indirectly affects the access of women to education. [Malala Fund](#) report (2021) noted that, education of at least four million girls in developing countries will be interrupted due to climate-related events. Additionally, the employment model for women in developing countries relies heavily on more vulnerable informal sectors that include untaxed economic activities, non-regulated and unprotected by the state. These sectors leave women out of any kind of protection of labour laws or social benefits, which make women more open to be affected by the consequences of climate-related disasters. When the inequalities faced by women intersect with other axes of socioeconomic disadvantages, the level of vulnerability for climate-related issues increases exponentially.

Despite these challenges, women and girls play a crucial role in achieving all levels of sustainability, which can be observed through the active role they play in achieving the climate targets by 2030 and consequently 2050 in leadership positions during various high-level international events, such as the COPs. The most notable women leader against the mitigation of climate change is the 20-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg started

*Bahçeşehir University & CIFAL Istanbul-UNITAR; CIFAL Istanbul-UNITAR; CIFAL Istanbul-UNITAR

her climate protests in August 2018 that caused millions of people to demand immediate climate action from the governments. Her journey has impacted the lives of millions and influenced other climate activists to be more present in this race against time.

While her story is an inspiration, the efforts of especially indigenous women and women in the global south that lead the frontline against climate change are underrepresented in environmental decision-making at all levels. Research conducted by the [UNFCCC](#) (2021) showcased that the time allocated to women in the plenary meetings between May and June of 2020 have only been 26 percent of the overall sittings. However, this is not a definitive role of women leadership in the fight against climate change. Of all the national climate action plans under the Paris Agreement, known as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), 85 percent included references to the intersection of gender inequality with climate change, according to [UNFCCC's 2021 NDCs Synthesis Report](#).

During the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) between 6-20 November 2022, which took place in Sharm el-Sheikh, parties agreed on a draft decision that was adopted on the [Intermediate review of the implementation of the gender action plan](#) (Draft decision - /CP.27 (FCCC/CP/2022/L.15). This draft suggests gender mainstreaming and the recognition of the equal and meaningful participation of women during the decision-making process at the local, national and international level regarding any aspect of the UNFCCC process. However, out of the 110 heads of states that participated at this high-level convention, only 7 of them were women at COP27. A research conducted by [Women's Environment and Development Organisation](#) (2022) compares the percentage of women across all national delegations between 2009 and 2021, at COP15 and COP26 respectively, and shows that the percentage of women has only risen from 30 percent to 38 percent in the last decade. According to a report conducted by BBC, the women participation in country negotiating teams at COP27 was even lower than last year with 34 percent. This shows the contradictory nature of the global gatherings at the decision-making process regarding the adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

There are several ways in which foreign policy can have a significant impact on women. For instance, foreign policy can influence the economic opportunities available to women, as well as their access to education, healthcare, and other essential services during the critical time we must achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Foreign policy can also affect the level of violence and discrimination that women experience, both within their own countries and abroad.

Therefore, it is significant to consider the different ways in which gender can influence sustainability and to ensure that the needs and perspectives of all genders are considered in policy and decision-making related to climate adaptation and mitigation. This can involve, for instance, promoting gender-responsive approaches to environmental policy, supporting women's leadership and participation in sustainability initiatives, and working to address the unequal power dynamics that often contribute to gender-based disparities.

Overall, considering the intersection of mainstreaming gender and climate adaptation may lead to creating more inclusive and effective approaches to addressing environmental challenges and may act as a catalyst towards greater social and environmental justice. Closing the gender gaps during the adaptation and mitigation process in decision-making will create the right conditions for the gender-transformative climate action. As [Mandy Rambharos](#), Commissioner of the Presidential Climate Commission of South Africa (2022), told at the COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, "Inclusivity is not a tick box exercise. It's about how we internalise and mainstream women in decision making at all levels." Rambharos underlines the critical aspect of increasing participation of women and other marginalised groups in policy making will impose a democratic element to climate action.

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Sustainable Development Goals & Gender Equality:

Progress and Challenges

Bezen Balamir Coşkun*

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all UN member states in 2015. Within the context of the 2030 Agenda, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are accepted as a blueprint for all state and non-state actors to contribute to worldwide peace and prosperity. SDGs are considered as a call for action by all countries. Among the SDGs, Goal 5 is dedicated to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It underlines the urgent need for accelerated action around the world to promote gender equality in every areas of development.

In the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 77), which was held on 13 September 2022, the effects of global crises such as COVID-19, climate change and ongoing conflicts and wars were discussed by highlighting the need for building global sustainability and resilience to enable gender equality. Since 2019, global crises have increasingly resulted in a dramatic backlash on women's rights. They risked the already insufficient progress in gender equality. In this context, UN Women's Gender Snapshot 2022 report became a baseline for understanding the disproportionate impacts of global crises on women and girls. The findings of UN Women's Gender Snapshot 2022 indicate a very slow advancement on SDG5, which is closely related to the gender specific indicators in other SDGs. Based on available data, we are not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. 28% of the SDG 5 indicators and sub-indicators are *very far or far from target*; one in three indicators and sub-indicators are at *moderate distance from target*. Only 12% are at *target met or almost met*. The data shows that women's sexual and reproductive rights were worsening and there was a concerning regression in women's economic empowerment. According to the statistics, in 2022 there were over 380 million women and girls living in extreme poverty, and 44 million women and girls had been forced to leave their homes because of climate change, war, conflict and human rights violations. More than 1 in every 10 women and girls were subjected to sexual and/or physical violence, and 49% of women who live in urban areas reported that they did not feel safe when walking alone at night.

Gender data gap was identified as a significant problem of evaluating progress in gender equality. Despite some improvement, data gaps remain a challenge. Only 47% of data that was required to track progress on SDG 5 were available. Gaps in gender data has made it difficult to monitor progress for women and girls. Further funding to invest in national statistical capacity is required for improving gender specific data which is essential in monitoring the targets of gender equality and making women and girls visible.

In 2022, aftershocks of COVID-19 pandemic accompanied with the violent conflicts and civil unrests triggered setbacks in progress. Particularly among women and girls living in fragile or conflict- affected countries such as in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria, there were serious backlashes in women's rights and freedoms. Global developments have reminded that there can be no real progress in peace and development without gender equality. We are still far from achieving SDG 5 by 2030 as a result of the lack of bold action and funding. In 2022, funding for gender equality was not enough to respond increasing severity of global challenges and backlash in women's rights. If the progress will continue at this phase, we need at least 286 years to close the gap between men and women in all targets and indicators of the global gender equality goals. Progress on SDG 5 requires long-term

* TED University

structural changes, global cooperation and investments in the gender equality agenda to overcome discriminatory practices and to place SDG 5 back on track.

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Female Founders of 2022 and an Insight Into VC Founding

*Nilsu Derici**

Although women found 38 percent of US companies, they only get two percent of the venture funding. Researcher Dana Kanze dismantles the reasons for the gender disparity for start-up fundraising. Her observations are based on the *Regulatory focus* theory which explains the difference between two types of motivation: promotion focus and prevention focus. Promotion focus is about achieving goals and desires, and is concerned with gaining things and achieving success. Prevention focus is about avoiding negative outcomes and is concerned with safety, responsibility, and security (Kanze et al. 2020).

The research found that male entrepreneurs are more likely to be asked questions that are focused on promoting their business or ideas, while female entrepreneurs are more likely to be asked questions that are focused on preventing problems or risks. In fact, 67% of the questions asked to male entrepreneurs were promotion-focused, while 66% of those asked to female entrepreneurs were prevention-focused. The start-ups that were asked mostly promotion-focused questions ended up raising seven times more funding than those that were asked mostly prevention-focused questions. Let's keep this in mind in 2023, and encourage the industry to be aware and slowly break these biases (Kanze et al. 2018).

Although funding for businesses founded by women has decreased from the previous year, the percentage of venture capital funding going to companies co-founded by women in the US has increased to 15.4% in 2022, the highest it has ever been since 2017. For startups founded solely by women, however, the percentage of funding has dropped to a low of 2%, the lowest it has been since 2016.

Here are some Female Founder 'Stars' of 2022 with various professional backgrounds and from different regions.

Yuliia Tkachova (Masthead) – Canada / Data Analytics

Yuliia Tkachova is originally from Ukraine and now lives in Canada. She holds a master's degree in statistics. She expresses concern about the ongoing conflict with Russia and the impact it has had on her loved ones in her home country. She is an experienced product manager who has provided solutions powered by ML. She has founded Masthead in 2021, which is a tool that uses machine learning to keep track of all the data stored by its clients. It alerts the data team if it notices anything unusual about the data, which can help prevent costly mistakes that are based on incorrect information.

Anne Boden (Starling Bank) – United Kingdom / FinTech

Anne Boden is the CEO and founder of Starling Bank, a British digital banking company. She has extensive experience in the banking and technology sectors, having spent over 30 years establishing and managing international banking and payments organizations. Starling Bank is a highly regarded, fully licensed bank that aims to provide a more fair, intelligent, and personal banking experience than traditional banks. It offers a range of account types and a payment service for businesses, and its innovative technology allows customers to easily manage their money through their mobile devices. In 2022, while some UK fintech companies were facing

* *Wiser Media*

challenges such as layoffs and business restructuring, Starling Bank achieved its first annual profit, earning £32.1m for the year ending March 31, 2022.

Kira Unger (Pocket Law) – Sweden / LegalTech

Kira Unger is the CEO and co-founder of PocketLaw. PocketLaw is a company that offers contract creation and management software to small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups. The software helps these businesses navigate legal contracts without the need to hire a lawyer, which can be cost-prohibitive for some. It is also designed to assist in-house legal teams with their workload. Before starting the company in 2018, she worked as an associate at Mannheimer Swartling. She received her degree from Stockholm University. In 2022, Kira and her co-founder Olga Beck-Friis successfully raised \$11 million in a Series A funding round.

Julie Zhuo (Sundial) – United States /Product Analytics

Julia Zhou is the founder of Sundial and the former VP of design at Facebook. She has written a management book in 2019 called “The Making of a Manager: What to Do When Everyone Looks to You” which became a Wall Street best seller. Her company Sundial's software helps to comprehend the product's narrative and provides insights related to the mission and vision, allowing team members to prioritize important goals, strategies, and tasks. 2022 is the year Sundial has started to grow, their initial launch is expected at 2023.

Hande Cilingir (Insider) – Turkey/Singapore / E-Commerce

In 2022 Cruchbase has announced that CEO and Co-Founder of Insider Hande Cilingir, has been listed as the third Woman CEO located outside of the US. Hande has a worldwide work experience in marketing and operations and is the first Turkish female founder to achieve unicorn status. Insider Pte. Ltd. is a software development company that offers a growth management platform for digital marketers. The platform uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to deliver personalized experiences across web, mobile apps, and advertisement channels. Insider serves customers globally. In March 2022, Insider raised \$121 million in a series D funding round, which valued the company at \$1.22 billion post-money. This brings the company's total capital raised to \$167 million.

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An Eventful Year for Post-Brexit Britain

*Bezen Balamir Coşkun**

In Britain the most memorable event of 2022 was the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-running monarch in British political history. Besides Elizabeth's death, 2022 has been an eventful year for Britain. In particular, the aftershocks of the Brexit process continued throughout 2022. The events experienced during the pandemic period and the austerity policies to curb public expenditures combined with the aftershocks of Brexit, made the country even more fragile. As everywhere, women were the most affected by the economic and political crises that prevailed the country.

The most important impact of Brexit was in the field of economy. The British Sterling has slumped throughout the year, with the dollar-sterling parity hit a record low of \$1,035 in September 2022. Another record was experienced in energy prices. 8 million Britons faced “energy poverty” in Britain, which entered 2022 with the energy ceiling price increased to £3,549. The gas bills, which were exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, made the life of middle- and lower-class British people even more difficult as inflation rose to its highest level. The record rise in inflation inevitably led to a 7% increase in basic food prices in March. In October food prices broke another record and rise to 11%. This increase in food prices in 2022 was recorded as the highest rate in 30 years. The English Breakfast Index, which was based on the minimum price of the products in typical English breakfast, increased to £34 at the end of 2022. The rapid rise in energy and food prices and the increase in inflation triggered the demands of the working class for a wage increase. The strike of 40,000 railway workers was followed by a strike by public transport personnel, postmen, and nurses in London. In the summer months, when basic services were disrupted and the British economy was severely damaged by strikes, the British also had to deal with the highest temperatures in history. During the heat wave in July 2022, 3,271 more deaths than average were recorded.

Economic turmoil caused a turmoil in domestic politics too. During 2022, Britain saw 3 prime ministers. The scandals in which Boris Johnson was personally involved, the bad course of the economy, the cost of living and the tax increase caused the public support for Johnson to fall below 20%. The resignation of the ministers from his cabinet forced Johnson to resign. Liz Truss, who replaced Johnson, also resigned in July 2022. By staying at 10 Downing Street only for 49 days, Truss became the shortest-serving prime minister in British political history. Liz Truss had become prime minister after Boris Johnson could not govern the pandemic period and caused the British people to stuck in an unemployment-inflation-recession triangle. Truss was not expected to create a miracle, but it cannot be said that she deserved humiliating approaches in the British press about whether she could survive longer than off-the-shelf lettuce. Following Truss' resignation, one of the richest men in Britain, Rishi Sunak, was elected as the new prime minister and Conservative Party leader. Coming with the claim that he will revive both the Conservative Party and Britain, Sunak became a popular name in the British media and promised to restore Britain's former glory.

After such an eventful year, following questions remained unanswered in 2022: Will there be a return from the point where the series of bad decisions brought Britain after the Brexit referendum? What will be King Charles' stance on balancing British society and guiding policy makers. It seems that the economic difficulties faced by

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women and the poverty of retired, disabled, immigrant women and single mothers will continue to be ignored. The economic measures and austerity policies announced in the Fall Declaration in November 2022 will likely to multiply the poverty of women from disadvantaged groups. As a result of the gender-blind measures taken in the field of economy, 1.7 million mothers quit their jobs because they could not afford daily care expenses since state aid to single mothers was increasingly restricted. Women's unemployment further increased as a result of austerity measures to be taken in hospitals and schools, where most of the employees were women. 2022 wasn't a good year for British women. However, it is equally promising that there are voices raised in favor of a feminist recovery model out of the recession.

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The Historical Presidential Elections in Brazil and The First Lady Effect

*Ekin Ürgen**

The presidential elections in 2022 were a test for the future of democracy in Brazil. Brazil's former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (commonly known as Lula) of the left-wing Workers' Party (PT) and incumbent Jair Bolsonaro of the conservative Liberal Party (LB) competed for the presidency in a two-round presidential election. The elections took place amidst growing political polarization, acts of political violence, widespread disinformation campaigns and growing concerns regarding the possibility of Bolsonaro contesting the results and seizing power unconstitutionally. On October 30, Lula narrowly defeated Bolsonaro in the second round of the elections. Following the results, Bolsonaro supporters furiously took to the streets to protest and after two days of silence, Bolsonaro agreed to a transition of power.

Lula and Bolsonaro were not the only polarizing figures of this election. Brazil's First Lady, Jair Bolsonaro's wife Michelle Bolsonaro became a central figure in his election campaign in 2022. Michelle, who is a fervent evangelical Christian, kept a low profile much of her husband's time in office and only came to the forefront with her involvement in charity work for people with disabilities. In 2022, however, she was part of all the rallies and TV ads, displaying her outstanding public speaking skills and growing her popularity among the Brazilian public. Michel was dubbed as Bolsonaro's "secret weapon", and was put front and centre to reverse Bolsonaro's waning popularity with women voters and consolidate support from his evangelical base.

Bolsonaro, who is known for his misogynistic, racist and homophobic rhetoric, is not popular among women. In 2014, he told a Congresswoman "I would never rape you because you do not deserve it." In an 2011 interview, when he was asked what he would do if his son fell in love with a black woman, he answered "I don't run that risk because my sons were very well educated." His presidential campaign in 2018 had led to a historic wave of protests all around Brazil, with women denouncing his candidacy and mobilizing under the hashtag #EleNão (#NotHim). Ahead of the 2022 elections, in addition to his offensive and crude language, his pro-gun policies and the economic crisis were among the issues that disconcerted women. In order to turn the tide around and soften his image in the eyes of women, Michelle's figure as an evangelical woman gained importance. He launched his re-election campaign hand-in-hand with Michelle who gave a speech repelling claims that her husband "doesn't like women." During the election campaign, Michelle worked towards winning the heart of women, and more specifically, evangelical women. She promoted her husband's projects for women on social media, coordinated the campaign for women's vote and toured the country alongside allied congresswomen and female politicians from the LP. With her traditionalist comments such as "the wife is the husband's helper," she enabled to keep the conversation on issues like religion and family and played down her husband's misogynistic comments. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these efforts worked briefly but had their limits. According to a poll published before the second round of the elections, his support among women remained the same, %29 while Lula's support grow to %49.

Bolsonaro's political movement stands on the conservative groundswell in Brazilian society and enjoys broad support from the Evangelical Church – a key factor in the ascent of Bolsonaroism. Brazil's evangelicals make up about one-third of the population and have a significant influence in politics. As mentioned before, Michelle's image as an evangelical woman was strategically reinforced during Bolsonaro's election campaign. She often used religious references and religious rhetoric calling Bolsonaro "one of God's chosen ones," posting prayers on social

* WFP Volunteer

media or saying that the presidential palace had been consecrated to demons before Bolsonaro's presidency. Her message was clear "Don't look at my husband. Look at me. You will be voting for me and what I represent." She performed "the face of the conservative and fundamentalist evangelical in Brazil, a believing and wise wife who builds her home, who is God-fearing and balances her husband's difficult and explosive temperament."

She eventually became "the leading evangelical voice from Bolsonaro's camp" and closed the enthusiasm gap with evangelical voters that her husband was unable to close.

It has been highlighted by many that even though Bolsonaro lost the presidential elections, what he stands for has not been defeated. Bolsonaro managed to ideologically unify once dispersed far-right forces in the country, the LP has the most seats in both chambers of Congress and the forces that empowered him still hold a significant influence. Michelle surely had a role to play in the consolidation of his support base.

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Israeli Elections 2022 and Women's Political Representation in Israel

*Tuğçe Ersoy Ceylan**

Despite having a female Prime Minister (Golda Meir, 1969-1974)[†] contrary to many Middle Eastern countries, the representation of women in the Israeli politics has been problematic since the beginning. This was the case with the latest elections in Israel. Moreover, with the formation of the Netanyahu-led new government, the issue seems to become fierier in Israeli politics and society. Israel's 37th government is by far the country's most far-right government with radical religious Zionist parties that by doctrine exclude women from the public sphere.

Yet, women's movement in Israel have been persistent before the foundation of Israel on 14 May 1948. There were both socialist and suffragist women's movement in the pre-state period (Safir & Swirski 1994). After the proclamation of the state of Israel, the supposed gender equality came to be reflected in compulsory military service for women. The state belonged to every Jew regardless of gender. But even this did not change the fact that citizenship is gendered from the beginning in Israel, and women are not fully represented in politics.

Hence, Israel enters the new year with the most far-right religious government that has no precedent in the political history of the country. The ontological securities of women in the firsthand and that of the minorities and LGBTQ movement as well are under threat by this coalition of far right and ultra-Orthodox factions of society: Likud, Religious Zionism, Otzma Yehudit, Noam, United Torah Judaism and Shas.

Israel has seen five elections in the last four years. Normally the elections are being held every four years. In the Israeli parliamentary system, none of the parties have ever received enough votes on their own to secure a majority of seats in parliament. This paves the way for the formation of coalitions in order to reach 61 seats needed to form a government. With 3.25% election threshold, even small parties can get a certain number of seats and be a partner to the coalition. The coalitions haven't been successful in recent years, in satisfying the needs or the desires of all factions of the society and eventually this led once again to another round of elections and the victory of Benjamin Netanyahu in 2022. With his latest victory, Netanyahu has become the only Prime Minister (PM) who came to power 6th time, even more than David Ben-Gurion, the first PM of Israel!

The new government has sworn in on 29 December 2022. In the 30-member cabinet there are just five women. This might not be seen by some as a sharp decrease since the previous government included nine women in the cabinet. However, with far right and ultra-orthodox partners, in this coalition every number count and any lack of participation or representation of women is interpreted as the realization of the ideological doctrine of those parties.

The political participation and representation of women is a worldwide issue, however in the Israeli context, the issue gets more complicated as it is related to the ideological and ontological foundations of the State of Israel. The politics in Israel is over-dominated by security issues. This over-dominance is driven both by the geopolitical reality and the historical facts of Holocaust. The Israeli social and political context is heavily focused on national security due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Itzkovitch-Malka & Friedberg, 2018). The existential threats coming out of terror attacks, low-intensity conflict and regional hostilities bring security always to the forefront. Other issues become less important and less urgent. Hence, issues such as economics, social welfare,

** İzmir Democracy University*

[†] For a critic about the feminism of Golda Meir see Triger, Z. (2014). Golda Meir's Reluctant Feminism: The Pre-State Years. *Israel Studies*, 19(3), 108-133

education, gender equality have been deferred. In such political climate, the substantive representation of women decreases. The descriptive representation gets its share as well since the women are seen less qualified to address national security matters.

As one of the consequences of the fact that the country is born into the wars, Israel has been labeled as a nation in arms and hence has become a militarized and inevitably patriarchal society. The ongoing armed conflict contributed to the militarization of the Israeli society and this phenomenon is central to the status of women in society and politics, and also pivotal to the solidification of the mode of patriarchal relations. The fact that the military has a central role and status due to the obvious reasons makes it as the primary institution that contributes to the construction of gender inequality in Israel. The socio-political context which is based on militarism, nationalism and security marginalizes and discriminates against all women in all aspects. In this context, the women are perceived as a means in the service of demography, they are provided the role of mother and wife.

The lack of separation between religion and state in Israel is another catalyst that replicates the patriarchal patterns and entrenches gendered discrimination in political and legal spheres. The state's first 50 years saw women's representation in the range of 6-9%. This trend has been on the rise since 1999 (Rahat & Itzkovitch-Malka 2012). In terms of descriptive representation, left-wing parties have been the ranks through which the women entered the Knesset (Itzkovitch-Malka & Friedberg, 2018). Not surprisingly, the worst parties in terms of women's representation have been the religious ones, with only six women holding a Knesset seat out of total 340 religious parties' seats (Rahat & Itzkovitch-Malka 2012).

The 37th government with radical religious Zionist parties seems excessively far from either descriptive or substantive representation of women. Neither the ultra-Orthodox Shas nor United Torah Judaism parties have any female parliamentarians. The fundamental *kulturkampf* within the Israeli society has been the religious-secular cleavage and with the 2022 election results, one might argue that the winner to this round of cultural struggle between religious and secular Israelis is the religious community. However, one should not overlook the fact that there has been a record number of women in November 2022 elections and four of them were leading the parties: Ayelet Shaked, Zehava Galon, Merav Michaeli and Hadar Muchtar. But as Elkayam argues, none of them was a realistic candidate for prime minister.

Well, why is there fear and concern among the women in Israel regarding the 2022 Election results? Women's political participation has always been a non-issue, a marginal problem that never gained public acknowledgement (Herzog, E. (2005). The actual concern is related to the very composition of the new government. There is none among the religious parties in the Netanyahu government that advocate the political representation of women, nor their presence in the public sphere. Now, these parties have political power and they obtained critical ministerial positions.

In 2020, Member of the Knesset (MK) Moshe Arbel introduced a bill to amend the Women's Equal Rights Law. With this bill, women would not be entitled to equality when it came to any position that the Chief Rabbinate defined as a "religious" role. And still, the Haredi and religious Knesset members have tried to pass another bill that would give state rabbinic court the jurisdiction by consent (or arbitration) over civil matters that are currently under sole jurisdiction of the civil courts. This would expand the authority of the state rabbinic court, which would have a devastating effect on the status of women in Israel.

These past efforts are the precursors of what the religious MKs with ministerial and legislative power can achieve in this new government. It has always been hard for the women in Israel, but the future would require much more struggle and effort for women's rights and gender equality.

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Women in Ethiopia's Tigray Conflict

*Bilge Şahin**

In November 2022, the two-year armed conflict between the Ethiopian government and armed groups in the Tigray region was resolved as a result of negotiations under the leadership of the African Union. Sexual violence against women was committed systematically and widely throughout the conflict. However, women were not included in the peace process and sexual violence crimes against them were not addressed. Despite the fact that 38.8 percent of Ethiopia's parliament is made up of women representatives and the country's first female president, Sahle-Work Zewde, has served since 2018, the country's failure to take a political stance on sexual violence crimes and exclude women from the peace process has disappointed both the international and local community.

How did Ethiopia end up in this situation?

Ethiopia was ruled by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a four-party coalition, from 1991 to 2018 with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) the dominant party. The government established ethnically divided regional governments, however, it suppressed calls for greater autonomy which created widespread ethnic tension and contempt for the TPLF. The EPRDF gave up control after facing prolonged public demonstrations in Oromia and Amhara. Abiy Ahmed, an Oromo politician, was chosen as prime minister by the parliament. Although Abiy tried to restructure the administration and economy, there was increased ethnic tension nationwide. In September 2020, when the TPLF protested the federal government's plan to delay elections because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict reached its boiling point. Tensions rose until armed conflict broke out in early November 2020.

During the conflict in northern Ethiopia, the widespread and systematic occurrence of sexual violence crimes has been reported with more than two thousand cases. At various points during the fighting, sexual violence was committed by forces from all sides, including the Ethiopian army and Eritrean forces. People of all sexes and ages have reported sexual violence crimes in the districts of Tigray, Afar, and Amhara. Rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, forced nudity, inserting foreign objects into victims' genital organs, and compelling people to engage in sexual violence against their family members were the most prevalent types of sexual violence identified.

The occurrence of sexual violence crimes is often explained as a weapon of war which enables armed groups to achieve their military and political goals (Cohen et al. 2013). If the conflict is caused by tensions between different ethnic, religious, or national groups, women's bodies symbolically embody the identity of the 'enemy' through their roles as biological, cultural, and social reproducers of the community and sexual violence incidents become tactical tools to 'spoil' this identity and destroy the fabric of the opposition's society. Armed groups may also use women's bodies to establish dominance by sending symbolic messages to the (male) enemy that they cannot protect 'their' women. Furthermore, punishment of a community for alleged collaboration with other armed groups or disobedience can take the form of sexual violence crimes as a 'weapon' (Freedman 2015). In Ethiopia, sexual violence crimes were committed strategically by central government forces against Tigrayan people to eliminate and forcibly displace them. These crimes perpetrated by the TPLF appear to have been ethnically motivated revenge in response to atrocities committed by federal forces and their allies in Tigray.

* Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University

Where women have a significant number of representatives, it is expected that a political stance against sexual violence crimes is established. Several official statements by the Ethiopian government acknowledge sexual violence crimes. However, these statements never mentioned Ethiopian forces as perpetrators. Moreover, although Prime Minister Abiy pledged to prosecute those responsible, the government has not yet taken any tangible action to stop or prevent these crimes. Only Filsan Abdi, then Minister for Women, Children and Youth, openly acknowledged the involvement of Ethiopian state soldiers in sexual violence crimes. She also claimed that senior officials tried to obscure any reference to rape by government and Eritrean soldiers from the official investigation and neglected to sincerely pursue justice in favour of propaganda. She resigned in protest over the conflict in 2021. Increased women's representation is very important; however, it does not directly lead to equality. Due to gendered power relations embedded in decision-making processes and institutional structures, 'adding' women may not directly translate into a space to speak. Even if they speak, their contributions are often not included in final decisions (Cohn 2014). In Ethiopia, although women are present in positions of political power, this does not lead to preventing sexual violence crimes or prosecuting its perpetrators.

Nevertheless, women in Ethiopia resist conflict and sexual violence crimes in multiple other ways. Women's civil society groups from Tigray and several international NGOs have gathered for urgent conversations on what can be done to stop the atrocities and violations of human rights against women and girls. They issued open letters and united pleas to urgently end sexual violence crimes. Throughout 2022, peace rallies have been organized by women civil society groups calling for an end and a peaceful resolution to the ongoing civil war in Ethiopia. Demonstrations have been held where women carry banners with messages of peace, the role of women in peace, and condemning war-related rape and sexual assault against women.

Unfortunately, during official conflict resolution processes, women remain invisible. In December 2021, a male-dominated National Dialogue Commission was established to alleviate the differences and misunderstandings between various sections of society in Ethiopia and contribute to the peace process. This shows that women's representation in politics is a mirage, and during conflict and peace processes, women continue to be marginalized from high politics.

In November 2022, following talks mediated by the African Union, the Ethiopian government and Tigray forces signed an agreement to permanently cease hostilities, including violent acts as well as hostile propaganda, rhetoric, and hate speech. In addition, both parties agreed to respect international humanitarian law and thereby protect civilians. However, during the negotiations, women's participation remained invisible and sexual violence crimes were not mentioned. Nevertheless, a clear acknowledgment of the occurrence of sexual violence crimes and an explicit commitment to end and prosecute these are vital pillars of achieving peace overall.

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NATO's 2022 Priorities

*Sinem Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Sezen Kaya-Sönmez**

NATO's top priority for 2022 was to initiate a new roadmap for the Alliance's transformation in order to keep pace with the changing security environment since the latest Strategic Concept of 2010. In this context, at the Madrid Summit on June 29-30, 2022, NATO adopted the [Strategic Concept](#), which reflected the content of the 2020 report titled [NATO 2030: Together for a New Era](#). NATO's preparations for the Madrid Summit, and of course, the new Strategic Concept, were directly impacted by Russia's military build-up along the Russo-Ukrainian border, followed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24. The controversial debate on NATO's brain death was finally shelved with this aggression which erupted in Europe's own backyard with the possibility of spillover to NATO allies, and the Strategic Concept was written in such a strong and decisive language that it confirmed NATO's *raison d'être* and its systemic legitimacy even after the Cold War.

NATO's main headlines in 2022 were formed by NATO's support to Ukraine, countermeasures against Russia, alternative policies for European security, and the design of the Strategic Concept as NATO's short-term roadmap. Madrid Strategic Concept demonstrated that NATO would adopt a more inclusive and hybrid security approach with its focus on gender equality, human security, and climate change. The inclusion of the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda into the text of the Strategic Concept was one of the defining moments for 2022. This ensures at the highest level that *integration*, *inclusiveness*, and *integrity* principles of the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda will be reflected in all NATO missions. Accordingly, the inclusion of gender equality as an integral part of NATO policies, projects, and operations, increasing the role of women in civilian and military spheres, adopting gender-neutral language (e.g., chair instead of chairman), developing training to ensure fair and equal treatment of women and men, and developing policies such as Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in such a macro-text are very promising for NATO's inclusive security policies. However, even though this hybridity and inclusive approaches are marked in 2022 Strategic Concept, the Alliance's focus has been a conventional one which has been directed at the war in Ukraine since February 2022.

Immediately after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia requested consultations under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty. Then, [NATO leaders issued a statement](#) condemning Russia's actions in the face of "the greatest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades" and initiating preparations for deterrence and defence, but they also agreed that there would be no deployment of forces to Ukraine and no "no-fly zone" in Ukraine. Ukraine has been a long-standing partner of NATO, and the country was included in the [Comprehensive Assistance Package \(CAP\)](#) in order to implement military reforms based on NATO standards in 2016. In line with this partnership, Ukraine has been receiving military supplies such as fuel, rations, military boots, medical assistance, military training equipment, etc. Moreover, although [NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg](#) emphasized that "the more we want a peaceful solution, the more urgent it is that we provide military support to Ukraine NATO has mostly supported Ukraine morally and discursively since the first day of the Russia-Ukraine War. Tangible institutional support to Ukraine with above-mentioned minimal non-lethal equipment is essential, however it is not NATO as an institution but the individual allies of NATO who could provide comprehensive and consequential support to Ukraine.

* Kadir Has University, Kadir Has University

In addition to its relative minimal support to Ukraine as an institution, NATO has decided to deploy NATO Response Force in Europe for the first time in its history in response to Russian aggression and to ensure European security. More than 130 air assets and 200 ships have been put on standby to protect NATO air-space against a possible Russian attack. [NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg](#) emphasized that NATO is not part of this conflict but has a responsibility to prevent its escalation and ensure that it does not spread beyond Ukraine. In this context, 40,000 troops have been deployed to the eastern flank under [NATO](#) command, supported by national deployments of NATO allies. Moreover, NATO leaders decided to establish multinational battle groups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia at their [meeting on March 24, 2022](#). While some of the [new battle groups](#) are in the process of being installed and integrated into NATO's structures, others, as in [Slovakia](#), have completed this process and are now operational. Thus, the impact of the war on NATO was not limited to assertive rhetoric; the war also necessitated solid preparations to strengthen collective security and deterrence.

As a direct consequence of this war, Sweden and Finland, which had not been involved in military alliances due to their neutrality, applied for NATO membership. As Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatened regional security, Sweden and Finland felt that their security was under threat and they both applied in order to be included in the collective defence arrangements as well as to ensure the stability in the Baltics. For NATO, the accession of Sweden and Finland would result in an inclusive security in the Euro-Atlantic area and in an increased defence budget for the Alliance. Accordingly both countries simultaneously submitted their formal applications to join NATO on May 18, 2022 and the [accession protocols](#) were signed on July 5, 2022. Hungary and Turkey have not yet ratified the protocols, and Turkey raised concerns about the support for terrorist organizations in Sweden and Finland. In order to resolve the dispute, a trilateral memorandum was adopted by Turkey, Finland, and Sweden at the sidelines of the NATO Summit in June 2022, which established a ["Permanent Joint Mechanism"](#) for close cooperation. Obviously, the effort to expand the security umbrella within the framework of NATO's "Open Door Policy" through Swedish and Finnish accessions as well as the mediation between Sweden, Finland, and Turkey for conflict resolution will continue vigorously in 2023.

Another reflection of the Russia-Ukraine war has been the increased defense spending of NATO members. More precisely, the Russia-Ukraine War triggered NATO members to reach the target of increasing the defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2024 set at the Wales Summit in 2014. [Germany](#), for example, made a statement immediately after the Russian intervention that it would meet this target. While it is not possible for all member states to achieve this goal in the short term (Spain and Denmark, for example, have set a target of 2029 and 2033, respectively), the war triggered a shift in members' efforts in the direction NATO wanted. In fact, [at the North Atlantic Council meeting](#) on December 14, 2022, it was decided to set NATO's civilian budget in 2023 at €370.8 million and its military budget at €1.96 billion. These figures represent an increase of 27.8% and 25.8%, respectively, compared to the 2022 budget. The increase in NATO's budget and in the defense expenditures of the member states is mainly driven by Russian intervention and the aim to defend the Euro-Atlantic space against the Russian threat.

In 2022, NATO endorsed the Strategic Concept, while supporting Ukraine and taking deterrent measures against the Russian threat to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. This concept states that NATO will maintain its three core missions of deterrence and defense; crisis prevention and management; and common security. Whereas the 2010 Strategic Concept referred to Russia as an actor with whom cooperation had been established and to the Euro-Atlantic region as a peaceful and aggression-prone zone, the 2022 Strategic Concept emphasized Russia as the most important and direct threat to the security of the allies and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. In other words, Russian aggression was directly reflected in the Madrid Strategic Concept. In addition to Russia, China was also in Allies' radar in Madrid due to its repressive policies. While China was not mentioned in previous Strategic Concepts, in the 2022 Strategic Concept, as Ambassador [Tacan İldem's](#) article points out, it was

underlined that China was not defined as a direct military “threat” to NATO, but a “challenge” because of its repressive policies.

The 2022 Madrid Strategic Concept also differs from the Lisbon Concept by including the “Women, Peace, and Security” agenda. By adopting United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on “[Women, Peace and Security](#)”, preparing Action Plans since 2007 to incorporate a gender perspective into NATO’s activities, and appointing a Special Representative for Women, Peace, and Security reporting to the Secretary-General in 2012, NATO has shown that it attaches importance to gender issues at the macro level by adding this perspective into the Strategic Concept. Indeed, by assuring that “Women, Peace and Security” agenda will be integrated into all NATO missions and gender equality will be promoted as enshrined in Article 5 of the Madrid Strategic Concept, NATO has injected a gender dimension in its macro-level security roadmap.

As a result, 2022 had been a year in which NATO had to develop an updated security guideline to overcome threats directed at the Alliance with new techniques focusing on gender equality, human security, and climate change while at the same time had defined measures to defend the Euro-Atlantic space against the Russian threat. In the shadow of the war in Ukraine, it is not hard to predict that 2023 will be another year of full of reactions and coercive measures against Russia, solidarity with Ukraine, deterrence for Eastern Europe, mediation for Sweden and Finland, as well as the ways in which Chinese challenge could be contained.

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DIŞ POLİTİKADA
KADINLAR
WOMEN IN FOREIGN POLICY



@WFP14



/WomenInForeignPol/



womeninforpol@gmail.com
dispolitikadakadinlar@gmail.com



+90 (216) 677 16 30



Tepeören Mahallesi, Okan
Üniversitesi Tuzla Kampüsü
34959