



DIŐ POLİTİKADA
KADINLAR
WOMEN IN FOREIGN POLICY

Women, World Politics and Turkey in 2023

Opinions from “Women in Foreign Policy”

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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

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Foreword

*Zeynep Alemdar**

2024 came with its own challenges. Women's rights and gender equality now constitute world's fault lines. Protecting the rights of women and girls and all marginalized groups during conflicts is no longer a generally accepted norm. On the contrary, authoritarian, populist and conservative governments do not shy away from discriminating women's rights. The abortion bans in the USA, the anti-LGBTI stance in some EU member states and Russia, the Istanbul Convention, which is being discussed not only in Turkey but also in some Council of Europe and EU member states through a disinformation campaign, are the most obvious indicators of this anti-gender trend.

This year, as Women in Foreign Policy, we are opening the Almanac with this topic. Nur Sinem Kourou and Moldir Mukasheva's chapter on the Anti-Gender Agenda in the World provides examples of anti-gender laws and movements in countries ranging from the United Kingdom to Uganda. Sezin Öney explains Türkiye's anti-gender agenda through a look at the May 2023 election campaign.

Esra Dilek evaluates a United Nations report that draws attention to the anti-gender movement in the world. The United Nations Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace policy brief in the Our Common Future series. Dilek underscores that, while the document encompasses a positive take on 'dismantling patriarchal power structures', the New Agenda for Peace does not clearly articulate links between militarism, misogyny, and patriarchy. İpek B. Karaman-Yılmazgil surveys the evolution of the UN's Women's Peace Security Agenda in 2023. Sezen Kaya focuses on climate change, an under-studied but surely the next phase of the Women's Peace Security Agenda. Kaya also draws attention to the feminist Climate Justice report, which reminds us that climate change will push 158 million more women and girls into poverty by 2050 and may cause 236 million more people to face food insecurity.

2024 started with unbearable accounts of violence against women in Gaza and Ukraine. Gender-based crimes increase exponentially during wars, yet they have only recently been defined in the international system. Tuğba Bayar explains how the International Criminal Court approaches gender-based crimes and why it is difficult to punish such crimes within the legal system. Müge Dalkıran examines the gender-based rights of migrant women in another international document. She explains how Non-Ukrainian Migrant and Refugee Women are ignored in the European Commission's Annual Report on Gender Equality.

Bilge Şahin writes about the treatment of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. The situation of civilians, women and children in the Hamas-Israel war, which began with Hamas' attack on Israel and continued with Israel's violent disproportionate use of force, is likely to remain in our memories for years to come. Şahin reminds us that the Palestinian authorities adopted a national action plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2017, thanks to the efforts of Palestinian women, and underlines again the necessity of women's participation in decision-making mechanisms in the post-conflict period. Selin Nasi reminds us how the Gaza war resonated with Turkish foreign policy. She discusses Turkey-Israel relations, which had begun to improve before October 7, but were again strained by the conflict.

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Sinem Cengiz reports on the effects of developments in the Middle East on women in 2023 and as well as her own experience at the first ever March 8, International Women's Day Reception in Riyadh, organized by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The recognition of the achievements of Gulf women and their contributions to the development of their countries, and the new developments even in countries that are considered the most conservative in the region, may give the Middle East some hope.

Selin Levi informs us about the upcoming presidential race in Mexico, where, for the first time, both the main opposition alliance and the ruling party nominated female presidential candidates. Mexico, being the first Latin American and “Southern” country to declare feminist policy, might well have a woman president by June 2024.

Yeşim Deniz takes us to another region which is not a women’s rights champion. Deniz traces the Women Peace and Security Agenda’s backbone, UNSCR 1325, in Southeast Asia. Discussing the Regional Action Plan adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2022 and the summit held in 2023, Deniz touches upon different dimensions of women's issues in Southeast Asia.

This year we focus on three politicians, all very different. Pınar Dost traces the political hardships that Kosovo’s president, Vjosa Osmani, went through in 2023. Discussing the shaky political environment in Kosovo and Turkey’s foreign policy towards the region Dost brings the Balkans to the Almanac. Yağmur Karagülle portrays Irish politician Clare Daly, a member of the European Parliament, who has been voicing the rights of Palestinian women in the European Parliament against Ursula Von Der Leyen, the President of the European Commission. We close the Almanac with a political figure who defined an era. Ayşegül Gökçalp Kutlu reminds us of the life and world-shaping decisions of Henry Kissinger, one of the most important politicians shaping US foreign policy.

This year's Almanac is again the fruit of a common voluntary effort. In the midst of all the personal and professional responsibilities, Women in Foreign Policy came together to produce this Almanac to account for the past year from a women's perspective and with a women's agenda. I would like to extend a big thank you to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bezen Balamir for her unwavering support and Dr. Müge Dalkıran for co-editing the Almanac this year. I would also like to thank Dr. Gökçe Gezer for ensuring that we receive the Almanac in this format every year, and Ekin Ürgen for managing our website from afar.

As you would see, this year’s Almanac also hosts young women who participated in the Foreign Policy School for Young Women in 2023 and later became our mentees. It is very gratifying to see that we have been able to pave the way for young women to engage more closely with the international women's agenda, which is one of the founding objectives of Women in Foreign Policy. There are now more young colleagues who are interested in the Women's Peace and Security agenda.

We hope you read our 2023 Almanac carefully, and join us in sustaining our belief that the more we will multiply, the more we will be able to put the Women Peace and Security agenda at the center of foreign policy, and try to make international politics a more egalitarian space..



WFP Opinions on 2023

Anti-gender Agenda Across the World

*Nur Sinem Kourou & Moldir Mukasheva**

On the eve of the 14 May 2023 elections in Türkiye, anti-gender agenda became a hot topic on the political agenda of Turkey, with parties and alliances formed around this issue. However, it is important to start by underlining that this situation is not unique to Turkey. In fact, for more than a decade, anti-gender movements have been present all over the world in the form of street movements, policies, and social media campaigns. Extreme right-wing actors, conservative and radical right-wing parties, and religious communities come together in different countries with the motivation of promoting an “anti-gender agenda”. Anti-gender agenda, while opening up a space where politics and civil society can feed each other, reveals conservative outrage and fears that strengthen right-wing politics, at the same time inserting itself as an important political issue at the government and parliamentary level. Ultimately, anti-gender policies have become an indispensable part of the mainstream political agenda.

According to the common definition of anti-gender agenda, it implies “movements against gender equality and/or sexual citizenship”. However, this vague description does not clearly define what anti-gender agenda actually means. For this reason, examples rather than definitions are more helpful in comprehending the issue. Nowadays, anti-gender agenda as an instrumental political tool, can intersect with many elements of the traditional right, ranging from nationalism, anti-immigration, and Euro-scepticism to fundamentalist religious approaches. One of the most prominent features of anti-gender agenda is the focus on the protection of traditional family and its values. Thus, particularly in the last year, the issue was intensively addressed from the “family” axis. Based on this view, anti-gender actors have started to promote a strong anti-LGBTQI+ agenda since 2020.

The practical reflection on the issue shows that anti-gender agenda gained momentum due to the successive implications of the feminist movement alongside the rise and strengthening of LGBTQI+ movements. Where feminist politics influences the agenda, the counter-agenda often develops a resistance, which is referred to as a “conservative backlash” or “global backlash” against feminism. The fact that anti-gender agenda mobilized against the strengthening feminism is also evidenced by the fact that the level of anti-feminism in Sweden, which is known as a frontrunner in terms of ensuring gender equality, is 30 percent higher than in Poland, 28 percent higher than in the United Kingdom, 26 percent higher than in France, 22 percent higher than in Hungary.

It is important to underline that the global empowerment of feminism has moved anti-gender agenda from a local issue to the focal point of conservative right-wing politics with similar actors and agendas across the world. At the same time, it has started to rise everywhere as an essential threat to democracies and human rights. While Europe stands out as the epicentre of the anti-gender movements, the rest of the world is not lagging behind this trend.

Despite the social movements or social media campaigns organized by a group of civil actors, the fact that anti-gender movements, which grew from the West to the East of the world in the 2020s, entered the agenda of political will and gained a legal basis is a warning factor encouraging to take the issue more seriously. By the end of 2023, a total of 75 laws that fostered and endorsed anti-gender bias came into force in 23 states of the United States of America. There are concerns about whether these anti-gender bills and the resulting laws, specifically targeted on the eve of elections, will turn into campaign material for Republican politicians in 2024. According to the law that

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entered into force in May 2023 in Uganda, people who are found to be involved in homosexual acts face life imprisonment and, in more extreme cases, the death penalty, which has brought the country to the most radical point in anti-gender agenda. With the implementation of the law, it was recorded that more than 300 LGBTQI+ individuals were penalized in the first eight months of the year. Russia, a country with a less favourable record on gender equality, banned all “medical interventions” aimed at changing the sex of a person and changing one’s gender in official documents and public records by a law enacted in July 2023. The legislative power of the right-wing parties in power is clearly reflected in their anti-gender stance. The right-wing government in Italy, which has been in power since 2022, has been discursively violating the rights of various vulnerable groups such as migrants. Women and LGBTQI+ individuals, who are at the forefront of these groups, were part of these attacks, as well. Thus, while same-sex civil unions were legalized in 2016, they have been one of the main targets of the incumbent government led by Prime Minister Georgia Meloni. As of 2023, the government has ordered local councils to prohibit same-sex partners from being registered on the birth certificate of their children. In Spain, founded in 2010 and providing a platform for anti-gender actors all over Europe, CitizenGo has a profound political impact by fighting to restrict the political and legal empowerment of LGBTQI+ individuals. Along with legal regulations, the activities of anti-gender actors have begun to reinforce a negative perception of LGBTQI+ people. For instance, one of the studies reveals that in the UK, LGBTQI+ representatives started to be perceived as a threat.

All these legal regulations and sanctions are the result of systematically organized and publicly expressed societal demands. To be more precise, in Russia, conservative actors, led by the Orthodox Church, have been actively raising their voices on a global scale “on the LGBTIQ+ issue, which is a foreign agenda to them”. In addition to that, Vatican-centred Catholic groups and the Church have been the championed of anti-gender agenda in the Christian world since 1994. When it comes to Turkey, For a long time the family-oriented conservative gender regime that has risen with the AKP (Justice and Development Party) did not provide an area of struggle for anti-gender actors in Turkey. In other words, there was not a ground for them to develop opposition. The rising opposition to the Istanbul Convention in 2019 suddenly created cooperation among anti-gender actors in Turkey. The pressure created by this cooperation played a vital role in Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. In addition to that, the mobilizing power of anti-gender agenda was discovered by political parties. Thus, anti-gender agenda became a movement widely supported both in the spheres of politics and civil society. The anti-gender street movement, the first of which took place in 2022 under the name of the Great Big Family Gathering, continues to keep the anti-gender agenda alive in Turkey by incorporating more actors in 2023. Nowadays, the main trigger of this agenda is the abolition of Law No. 6284 on gender-based violence to protect the family and prevent violence against women, which anti-gender actors in Turkey perceive as a remnant of the Istanbul Convention. Additionally, the group is demanding a ban on LGBTQ+ propaganda, which they define as a vague enemy that negatively affects future generations. President Erdoğan, who stated that he had heard the demands of anti-gender actors "by adopting the family law against the LGBT danger", voiced in the run-up to the elections, did not bring the issue to the agenda again after the elections, leaving fears alive about what the silence on this issue will lead to in 2024.

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Twin Political Casualties of Turkey's May 2023 elections: LGBTQ+ rights and Istanbul Convention

Sezin Öney*

Turkey's May 2023 general and presidential voting may be referred to as "almost elections": the ambitious oppositional alliance, Table of Six[†], "almost" won the presidential elections. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan fell just short of an absolute majority in the first round of presidential elections on May 14; and won re-election in the second run-off on May 28.[‡]

The outcome of the first round of presidential and the general elections were regarded as a "surprise", as most of the polls favored the united opposition Nation Alliance (Millet İttifakı) and their candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu. Confident that the winds of change were behind them, the Nation Alliance's parties, "almost" at their boldest in endorsing their resoluteness in advocating rights and freedoms. However, as the LGBTQ+ rights remained as the exception. This was specifically because the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and People's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) attacked the oppositional alliance for "supporting LGBT[§] at the expense of family values". Such insistent "accusations" turned the LGBTQ+ rights into a taboo subject for the opposition Alliance's politics throughout 2023 elections and up today.

Weaponizing anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric as a tool for to stifle the opposition throughout the 2023 electoral campaign served a dual purpose: the opposition retreated from put-up united front regarding President Erdoğan's withdrawal from the "Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence"-namely the Istanbul Convention in 2021, issuing an overnight decree in March 2021.

Government stance: "If we are not elected, LGBT will replace us."

One of the most emblematic statements of the May 2023 twin elections was by then-Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu: "If we are not reelected, who will replace us? These LGBT people will be elected instead of us. Those who want same-sex marriage will replace us." He was not alone in turning anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric into one of the main campaign topics of the governing Presidential Alliance. President Erdoğan also instrumentalized anti-LGBTQ+ statements in almost all his campaign speeches. One typical example was as follows: "They want to surrender the country to the ambitions of a handful of perverted ideological members, who covet the material and spiritual existence of our children...[The opposition] has become the battering ram of marginal organizations, LGBT defenders, globalists, and those who try to create sectarian strife."

According to the LGBTQ+ civil society platform Ünikuir's report on 14-28 May elections, Erdoğan appeared in 139 campaign activities, and he used anti-LGBTQ+ statements in 57 of these events. Erdoğan "accused" the

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[†] For the 2023 elections, the main opposition People's Republican Party (CHP) formed an alliance called "Nation" (Millet); together with nationalist İYİ Parti, liberal conservative DEVA, conservative Future (Gelecek), liberal Democrat (Demokrat) and conservative Felicity (Saadet) parties-named popularly as the "Table of Six".

SP, DP, as well as DEVA and GP met as the Table of Six to formulate a post Erdoğan government.

[‡] Despite the continued erosion of its votes, the governing AK Party remained in power due to the support of its People's Alliance. Meanwhile, President Erdoğan won 52% at the second round of presidential elections, whereas oppositional alliance's candidate gained 48%.

[§] As the governing AK Party and its alliance partners use the term "LGBT", their wording is directly quoted.

opposition leaders for taking a stance in favor of LGBTQ+ rights. Nonetheless, despite Erdoğan's "criticism" towards the Nation Alliance for being "pro-LGBTQ+", its leaders vehemently rejected claims-let alone proposing universal standards of rights and freedoms for these identity groups. Instead, the Nation leaders tried to "defend" themselves by refraining from talking at all about LGBTQ+ rights.

Opposition's government calibrated stance: "All rights but LGBTQ+ rights..."

The main opposition Republican People's Party's (CHP) then leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was quizzed back in 2021, at a mainstream news channel's interview "whether the LGBT community corrupts the Turkish family structure". Kılıçdaroğlu replied, "Not at all"-an answer that was turned into a source of controversy by the governing AKP circles during his presidential campaign in 2023. Kılıçdaroğlu himself refrained from commenting on the issue then on-but his monosyllable reply was weaponized by the People's Alliance through repeated "accusations" that he is "pro-LGBT". Even though Kılıçdaroğlu endorsed gender rights focusing over women's equality and advocated "ceasing of all forms of discrimination" throughout the 2023 campaign; he never went to the extent to mention the LGBTQ+ rights, nor was there any mention of the issue in the campaign materials. Mere exception was [a campaign poster](#) one year prior to the May 2023 elections; back in 2022, when Kılıçdaroğlu promised that "ethnic background, religious beliefs, disabilities and sexual orientation will cease to be disadvantages through laws."

Other leaders from Kılıçdaroğlu's alliance either skirted around the issue or opted for offering personal explanations regarding their personal stance towards the LGBTQ+ individuals. For example, the Nation Alliance's other heavyweight leader, nationalist İYİ Party's Meral Akşener, when asked "how they would approach the LGBT upon winning the presidential elections", said: "[The man \[then-Interior Minister Soylu\] keeps saying this: LGBT. \[He says\] if we were to come to power, we would allow man-to-man marriage...What's worse is, as if that it wasn't enough, \[he says\] men would also marry animals. What a fantasy...I invite all psychiatrists to examine this guy.](#)"

Back in 2020, Akşener was milder in her responses-but she never came close to even recognizing LGBTQ+ rights: "[As a mother, I would not want my child to make such a choice. This is my individual attitude. But I would not want a citizen to be beaten or subjected to violence when making such a choice.](#)"

Nevertheless, the Nation Alliance also included an openly anti-LGBTI+ party: Felicity. Its Chairperson Temel Karamollaoğlu was blatant in expressing his opinion in March 2023, "[Two men or two women come together and say, 'We are a family'. No way.](#)"

Eventually, the opposition alliance's united campaign documents and almost 250 pages long "[Common Policies Memorandum](#)", failed to include neither a reference to "gender rights", nor a promise to return to the Istanbul Convention.

Back in 2021, upon the issuing of the Presidential decree to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, there was a massive public mobilization campaign to use strategic litigation for annulling the decision. Thousands of lawsuits were brought before the highest administrative court, Council of State (Danıştay), by the women's rights organizations, 77 Bar Associations, as well as ordinary citizens. Opposition parties conjoined to support the grassroots mobilization; so, did influential civil society groups like the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD), representing Turkey's foremost companies. But that strong grassroots and politics interaction ceased to exist in the 2023 electoral campaign.

Overall, governing AK Party's policy to weaponize LGBTQ+ rights as a smearing campaign theme in 2023 elections was "successful" in rendering the topic as a "taboo" for the opposition. Turning LGBTQ+ related issues into a "pariah subject" hence forward also helped the governing party to eradicate the united public front against

withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. The government’s argument that this CoE’s Convention against domestic violence was “hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality” eventually drowned the link between politics and public mobilization against withdrawal with “demonization” of the concept of gender rights in 2023.

LGBTQ+ rights and withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention *both* cease to exist in political debates

The LGBTQ+ rights CSOs and activists of Turkey were under increasingly growing pressure, and public visibility of related events were restricted, such as the annual Pride parades are banned by the authorities since 2015. Nevertheless, up until the 2023 election campaign, some of the municipalities governed by the opposition parties did not refrain from endorsing LGBTQ+ rights, such as establishing “gender equality” units or councils, organizing related cultural event, and sharing pro-Pride social media messages. Throughout 2023, especially as the electoral campaign heated up, the local administrations and opposition in general shied away from LGBTQ+ related events and advocacy. However, simultaneously the political debates on withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention receded to the background in 2023, and ultimately “evaporated” all together in post-May elections’ period. As the March 2024 local elections approach; and neither LGBTQ+ rights nor withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention *both* cease to exist in political debates.

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Women, Peace and Security and Gender in the UN's 'New Agenda for Peace'

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On 20 July 2023, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented his policy brief on *A New Agenda for Peace* to Member States. The New Agenda for Peace is the ninth policy brief in a series on *Our Common Agenda*, offering proposals for future global cooperation. The policy brief outlines the Secretary-General's vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security for a world in transition, providing extensive recommendations about inter-connected challenges that the world faces today. From a gender perspective, the New Agenda for Peace can be assessed, first with a view to structural dimensions of gender-based violence, misogyny, patriarchy, and backlash on women's rights and, second, its (limited) references to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

With regards to wider gendered structures, the New Agenda for Peace involves references to misogyny, patriarchal oppressive power structures, and demilitarization. Under the section 'A Vision for Multilateralism in a World in Transition', it makes reference to femicide, the gender-based killing of women as a type of violence outside of armed conflicts fueled by misogyny, while also underlines that in conflict settings under conditions of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms fuel gender-based and sexual violence (p. 5). The document also notes that there is a rise in threats, persecution and acts of violence against women, including those in politics, and human rights defenders (p. 6). Perhaps one of the most important points in the report is the discussion on the normative challenges against human rights across the world including a gender perspective. The report mentions growing backlash against women's rights, including sexual and reproductive health and calls governments, the UN, and all segments of society to fight back and take concrete action to challenge and transform gender norms, value systems, and institutional structures that perpetuate exclusion (p. 7).

The New Agenda for Peace does not include any new recommendations on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Action 5 within the document calls for governments to "transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security" and offers three recommendations: 1) introduce concrete measures to secure women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making on peace and security, 2) commit to the eradication of gender-based violence and enact legislation against gender-based hate speech, 3) provide sustained, predictable and flexible financing for gender equality, calling to allocate of 15 per cent of official development assistance to gender equality, with a minimum 1 per cent as direct assistance to women's organizations, especially grass-roots groups mobilizing for peace.

The New Agenda for Peace has attracted some criticisms. Some commentators have noted that while the document encompasses a positive take on 'dismantling patriarchal power structures', illustrating how gender inequality is a systemic problem, it misses a broader commitment to advancing gender equality. Patriarchy is not one of the 12 action areas identified in the document, so it has no associated recommendations and no concrete proposals are offered. The calls for greater inclusion of women and more funding to promote gender equality are repetitions of UN calls in previous documents. Notably, a discussion on how patriarchy and militarized masculinity perpetuates violence is missing from the document. The New Agenda for Peace does not clearly articulate links between militarism, misogyny, and patriarchy.

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The report has also been criticized for adopting an ‘effectiveness’ approach to women’s inclusion in decision making processes. Accordingly, women’s inclusion is depicted as being important in the context of achieving other goals, not because women have the right to be included as full human being. The inclusion of women needs not be framed in terms of the benefits of such inclusion for achieving other goals or protecting women. This puts a limitation on the recognition of the full agency of women. Yet another criticism to the New Agenda for Peace centers on its lack of intersectional gender analysis. Although the document contains some references to indigenous women, older persons, persons with disabilities, women from racial, religious or ethnic minority backgrounds and LGBT+ persons and youth, these references are very limited.

Overall, although the New Agenda for Peace involves some positive components on women and gender, it does not offer concrete paths for action, both with regards to structural aspects of gender inequality and with regards to the WPS agenda. Regarding the WPS agenda, the launch of the Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security on 28 September 2023 revealed that progress in the 23rd year of the UNSCR 1325 adopted in 2000 has not reached desired levels. As it is noted in the report, negotiating parties continue to regularly exclude women in peace processes and there is still prevalent impunity for atrocities against women and girls, notable gender-based violence. National Action Plans (NAPs), national-level strategy documents outlining a government’s approach and course of action for localizing the WPS agenda, have also remained limited. As of the end of 2023, only 107 UN Member States (55%) have adopted a 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) while around 30% of NAPs are currently outdated, having expired in 2022 or before. The need for collective action for securing women’s rights both in relation to conflicts and outside of conflict situations remains prevalent. As such, more extensive discussion and specific recommendations and course of action is needed in policy documents like the New Agenda for Peace.

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Global Women, Peace and Security Agenda in 2023

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In October 2023, the United Nations Security Council conducted its annual Open Debate on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) to review the agenda's progress and identify and elaborate on its weaknesses and strengths. In 2023, the Open Debate became a genuine global forum with the highest number of speakers. Alongside member states, representatives of regional organizations such as the Arab League and African Union, the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, the UN General Secretary, the executive director of UN Women, and the executive director of Red Cross participated in the Open Debate and provided evidence from different parts of the world about the WPS agenda. The theme of the 2023 Open Debate was “Women’s Participation in International Peace and Security: From Theory to Practice.” The theme underlined the importance of full implementation of the WPS agenda, with a particular emphasis on the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in all decision-making processes regarding peace and security.

The 2023 Open Debate started with the UN Secretary General Report on the WPS agenda, highlighting several severe weaknesses in the atmosphere of burgeoning conflicts. The report extensively elaborated on the human rights violations, especially of women and girls, in fierce conflicts in Ukraine, Palestine, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Haiti. In recent years, conflicts have been raging, tensions are rising, coups are erupting, authoritarian governments are burgeoning, nuclear threat persists, and climate chaos occurs. In this environment, the lives of women and girls are shaped by constant insecurity, including forced displacement, denial of women’s basic rights, risk of human trafficking and abuse, and conflict-related gender-based sexual violence. According to the UN Women statistics, the number of women and girls living in conflict-affected countries doubled in 2023 compared to 2017. Violence against women becomes endemic. The Report also emphasized the necessity of women's equal, meaningful, complete, and safe participation in peace processes. However, financial support for gender equality in conflict is falling, and women’s organizations struggle to find resources, as UN Women indicated in the Open Debate.

During the ensuing day-long Open Debate on the WPS agenda, the commitment and encouragement of the principles of the WPS agenda were renewed. In the backsliding on women’s conditions, insufficient women’s participation in peace processes and rhetorical adoption of the WPS agenda are not enough. It is encouraged that all barriers to women’s participation in peace processes be removed and women and girls be protected from the negative impacts of conflicts. All briefers expressed concerns about the gap between normative principles and the implementation of the WPS agenda. Therefore, concrete actions to translate the WPS agenda into reality are required.

The WPS Index 2022/2023 also provides 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 of Oslo (PRIO). The 2022/2023 Index ranked 177 countries based on women’s inclusion, justice, and security criteria. At the highest end of the spectrum, the top 10 best-performing countries were Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Luxembourg, Iceland, Norway, Austria, Netherlands and New Zealand. At the end of the worst part of the spectrum, the worst performing ten countries were Afghanistan, Yemen, Central African Republic, Democratic

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Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Burundi, Syria, Eswatini, Somalia, and Iraq. According to the Index, Turkey was ranked as the 99th country.

There are also encouraging developments during 2023. Notwithstanding the existence of severe challenges, including increasing conflicts, democratic backsliding, increasing authoritarianism, and constant insecurity faced by women and girls, the National Action Plans (NAPs) continue to be a significant tool for countries to implement the WPS agenda both in their domestic and international policy. In 2023, the number of countries that committed to the WPS agenda reached was also the year of some encouraging developments. In the face of severe 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. By December 2023, the number of countries that committed to the WPS agenda had reached 107. Sri Lanka and Chad adopted their first NAPs in 2023. Turkey has yet to be among these countries.

The WPS agenda was also adopted 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. To recapitulate, the developments in 2023 one more time proved that fulfilling the goals of the WPS agenda is shaped by various challenges of rhetorical adoption and non-implementation of the agenda by the member states and necessitates a constant struggle, resilience efforts, and advocacy.

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Climate Change in Women, Peace and Security

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Climate change affects everyone, but not equally! 80% of people displaced by climate change are women. Compared to men, women and children are 14 times more likely to lose their lives due to climate change-related disasters. As a global security issue with a gender dimension, climate change is a fundamental part of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.

If we go back in time, in 2015, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), in its Resolution 2242, recognized for the first time that there is a relationship between climate change and the WPS agenda, in addition to security challenges such as terrorism, which was a significant development for both climate security and the WPS agenda. In 2022, in UNSC Resolution 2625, for the first time, the UN Mission in South Sudan recognized the nexus between climate crisis, peace, and security and explicitly called for a "gender-sensitive risk assessment of the adverse impacts of climate change." Thus, climate change has become a security issue with a gender dimension and has been recognized by the international community for causing inequality, deepening existing inequalities, and leaving certain groups in society (e.g., women and children) vulnerable.

Wildfires, floods, heat waves, and droughts are displacing people, killing crops and livestock, worsening air pollution, and increasing the spread of deadly diseases such as cholera, malaria, and dengue fever, with negative consequences for women and children. Women and girls, who are already struggling with gender inequality, are also facing increased intimate partner violence, disrupted education of girls, and the risk of early marriage, sexual exploitation, and trafficking due to the negative impacts of climate change. For example, drought and scarcity can negatively affect access to basic necessities such as food and water and cause income and food insecurity for women. In 2023, with the worst drought in Galmudug, Somalia, in four decades, female-headed households earned lower incomes and were more vulnerable to discrimination and increased food insecurity than male-headed households. Accordingly, female-headed households (59%) are more likely to experience food shortages than male-headed households (47%). Moreover, heatwaves increase the risk of malnutrition among pregnant and breastfeeding women and severe pregnancy complications such as premature births and stillbirths. It is known that child marriages are on the rise in some communities, with families potentially marrying off young girls to get money they can use for food and other necessities or for a better quality of life. For example, Aida was forced to leave their habitat with her family due to drought in Ethiopia and was married off at the age of 15 by her family in the belief that it would alleviate their problems. Similarly, the crop destruction and livestock due to drought in Somalia have led families to marry off girls as young as 14, such as Asma, for a more comfortable life. On the other hand, it is stated that as a result of Storm Daniel, which hit northeast Libya on September 10, 2023, approximately 230,000 women and girls need humanitarian assistance, including 24,000 pregnant women. With the climate crisis, women face not only the threat of death or food problems but also health problems. Rahman et al. (2023) conducted a study with 393 women in Ajmiriganj and Dharmapasha Upazila of Bangladesh on the relationship between the flood disaster in 2022 and women's mental health. Accordingly, approximately 67%, 65%, and 37% of women experienced severe or extremely severe depression, anxiety, and stress during the floods, respectively, and 89%, 88%, and 58% of

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women reported experiencing severe or extremely severe depression, anxiety and stress due to exposure to domestic violence during the floods. The impacts of climate change have become a fundamental security issue that directly threatens and makes women vulnerable.

In this respect, it is crucial to develop National Action Plans (NAPs), which are an essential step in transforming the goals of the women, peace, and security agenda into concrete policies by linking them to climate change. According to a study in 2020 analyzing the NAPs of 80 states, climate change was directly mentioned in the NAPs of 17 states (Smith, 2020). The Georgetown Institute for WPS, [2021-2022 Global Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Index](#), which measures the well-being of women in 170 countries, reveals that countries that score better on the WPS Index are more peaceful and stable, as well as less vulnerable to climate change and better prepared to respond to its impacts.

It is a long-term reality that climate change will cause more severe negative impacts on both ecosystems and people in the coming decades. The "[Feminist Climate Justice](#)" report published by UN Women in 2023 is an essential example of this, as it includes data that climate change could push 158 million more women and girls into poverty and cause 236 million more people to face food insecurity by 2050. While there has been progress on gender equality on a global level, policies are not sufficiently sensitive to climate change. In a world that is behind the global warming target, as long as there are actors who insist on not planning climate change adaptation and mitigation policies at national, regional, and international levels and who avoid cooperation, women who are already struggling with inequalities are adding another brick to their inequalities. However, it seems that this problem, which is currently snowballing, will be reflected on the WPS agenda as an avalanche in the coming years. To summarize, it is an indisputable fact that climate change is not only an environmental problem but also a security issue with a gender dimension.

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International Criminal Court's Policy on Gender-Based Crimes

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2023 has been a year in which international criminal justice is, unfortunately, widely discussed owing to armed conflicts, particularly in the Middle East among others. Despite the emphasis on various forms of crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law, a specific violence type is underexplored: gender-based crimes (GBC). Gender-based crimes are offences against men or women because of their sex and/or socially constructed gender roles. Sexual and gender-based crimes are a widespread weapon in armed conflicts all over the world the world over. Perpetrators use GBC to degrade, dishonour, punish, and ethnically cleanse communities. Women and girls are the first targets in this sense; such crimes are committed against persons, be them female or male, due to their socially constructed roles. Survivors go through deep traumas, and they are easily stigmatized in their communities. They cannot exist fully and equally in their societies; thus, victims remain isolated. Despite the harm GBC causes, these crimes remained less attended to during the broad development of international justice in a wide range of issue areas. Despite the detailed definitions of international crimes in various international instruments, besides well-known reproductive rights, violence targeting reproductive autonomy still needs a more profound understanding for establishing accountability.

The critical role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is, according to the Rome Statute (*see* Preamble), to fight against impunity and to establish individual criminal responsibility (Rome Statute, 1998, Article 25). It is the duty and authority of the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) to consider “the nature of crime, in particular where it involves sexual violence, gender violence or violence against children” (Rome Statute, 1998, Article 54(b)). Under the definition of four international crimes (Rome Statute, 1998, Part 2), the Rome Statute mentioned gender-based crimes in various ways. For instance, the definition of crimes against humanity contains persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity, including gender.[†] Under the definition of both war crimes and crimes against humanity, sexual crimes such as sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and forced sterilization are covered (Rome Statute, 1998, Article 7.1(g), Article 8.2 (b.xxii), Article 8.2 (e.vi)).

Notwithstanding this infrastructure, the Court failed to hold Germain Katanga accountable for sexual slavery and rape crimes as war crimes and crimes against humanity; acquitted him in 2014. The verdict paved the way for the formulation of the ground-breaking Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-based Crimes (SGBC) in the same year, not to neglect these crimes ever again. After the prosecutor declared their will to review and update the SGBC in January 2023, the ICC shared the new policy in December 2023 to strengthen its commitment to seek accountability for such crimes.

As already indicated by the Prosecutor Karim Khan, GBCs are vastly underreported due to the reluctance of survivors about what they have gone through. They fear stigmatization, retaliation, exclusion and rejection. The policy paper serves to satiate the justice gap by integrating a survivor-based and trauma-informed approach.

Although this policy is to inform the internal operational guidance of the ICC because it brings another level of clarity to the interpretation of the Statute, its influence is expected to reach out universally. Internationally, it will

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[†] Rome Statute, 1998, Article 7(h).

contribute to the development of international jurisprudence on gender-based crimes. These values will create a gender-competent analysis that will contribute both international, regional and national legal practice and day-to-day practice. According to the new approach introduced by the 2023 Policy, each survivor's experience is unique in many ways depending on the features of the victim and the features of what they are exposed to. Thus, each must be (legally) treated accordingly. The acknowledgement of the individuality of each case and the introduction of various procedural and analytical approaches towards the analysis of gender-based crimes will develop jurisprudence to be acquired by regional and local judges who see similar cases.

The policy of the OTP towards gender-based crimes foresees an interaction between the Court and national practice for enhanced awareness regarding the rights of the survivor, their unique needs and experiences. The improved approach towards the dignity of each victim is the key to the respect to be shown by international justice, as well as society. The trauma-informed approach is another key to ensuring the well-being of the survivor and the sensitive handling of cases during the jurisdictional process. The intersectional approach of the Court is revolutionary since it acknowledges the interconnectedness of various forms of discrimination and oppression, which is a result of the gender identity that attracts unique challenges from different groups.

Ultimately, the revolutionary nature of this gender competence policy extends its influence beyond the realm of the international judiciary, potentially impacting local levels. As it sets a precedent for acknowledging and addressing gender-based crimes in a more nuanced and inclusive manner, it stands as a beacon of progress toward ensuring justice and rights for all, particularly for those who have historically been marginalized or silenced. This shift holds profound implications for advancing women's rights and gender-related rights globally, representing a significant milestone in the pursuit of justice and equality.

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(Non-Ukrainian) Migrant and Refugee Women Have No Name in the Annual Report on Gender Equality in the EU

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Within the frame of the [EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) (hereinafter, the Strategy), the European Commission released its [2023 Report on Gender Equality in the EU](#) in March 2023 (hereinafter, the 2023 Report). The Strategy aims to prioritize gender equality in its politics and political actions in order to provide equal opportunities for all. The 2023 Report focuses on five key areas to monitor actions and achievements by EU institutions and Member States: being free from violence and stereotypes, thriving in a gender-equal economy, leading equally throughout society, gender mainstreaming and funding, and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

The role of the Strategy is undeniably crucial as it provides a framework for the Commission's work on gender equality and promotes a holistic and multidimensional approach to gender mainstreaming. Therefore, the annual reports and indexes serve as the main tools that demonstrate us the current situation where the EU and its Member States stand on gender equality. Moreover, both the Strategy and the 2023 Report (p.59) address the need for [intersectionality](#) in implementing gender equality policy. However, upon closer examination of the Report, this promise remains unfulfilled.

Although the 2023 Report has a separate section on "Intersectionality in implementing gender equality policy," where the concept of intersectionality is clarified and certain EU legislations and directives (e.g. the directive on violence against women) with inclusive approach are elaborated as examples, there is a lack of analysis based on intersectionality in the overall report. Even though the 2023 Report acknowledges that some women are at risk of facing intersectional discrimination based on their religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age or sexual orientation, neither the LGBTQ+ nor migrant and refugee women are adequately addressed in the 2023 Report. Such that, in a 75 pages-report, the migrant and refugee populations are referred only five times and only in relation to the Ukrainian nationality. While it is indisputable that the needs of Ukrainian refugee women, the most recent group of refugees to arrive in the EU, should be emphasized and appropriate policies for their needs should be developed, yet this should not mean that the needs of refugees from other nationalities should be ignored.

The first and the foremost issue arises from the activities of the criminal human trafficking networks targeting refugees for labour and sexual exploitation. According to the 2023 Report, 45 possible victims were identified in one of the operations against human trafficking via websites and social media platforms. 25 of them are with Ukrainian nationalities but other nationalities remained unnamed in the report (p. 10).

The second main issue concerns the social cohesion of refugees and migrants. Under the social cohesion section, various opportunities from the [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe \(CARE\)](#) to the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(AMIF\)](#), and activities planned by civil society and their focus on female refugees are explored, yet again only in the context of the Ukrainian refugees. Considering the diversity in the refugee and migrant profile and the high number of refugees coming from [various origin countries, including Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and most recently Türkiye](#), the report either suggests a bias towards allocating funds primarily for Ukrainian refugees or overlooks efforts aimed at addressing the needs of refugees from other nationalities. As the discussion

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on social cohesion is limited, the Report 2023 fails to address the obstacles confronted by migrant and refugee women, including lack of education or work experience, as well as health issues due to forced migration.

Last but not least, regarding work-related issues including pay gap, working conditions, and sexual harassment at work, there is no emphasis on the situation of the refugee and migrant groups. However, the data show that many ethnic minority women are paid less, working in worse conditions, facing higher childcare gap, and facing higher risks of exploitation in comparison with white women and ethnic minority men.

Overall, it is valuable to take actions for gender mainstreaming in the EU policies and to set indicators to measure progress on various areas from political decision-making and economic decision-making to external actions; however, the strategy falls short when it comes to policies implemented for intersectionality and excludes women with different backgrounds, which makes racialized women invisible in gender equality policies of the EU. As Audre Lorde states: “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own,” the EU cannot succeed a fully gender equality without recognizing the “double disadvantages” of the migrant and refugee women.

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Violence Against Palestinian Women Under Israeli Occupation

*Bilge Şahin**

As a result of the attacks carried out by Hamas on 7 October 2023, crossing the Gaza Strip into Israel, Israel has launched both air and ground attacks on Gaza, targeting residential areas, hospitals, schools, mosques, and churches, leading to the loss of tens of thousands of civilians. These attacks escalate the existing violence throughout the decades-long Israel-Palestine conflict, elevating them to the level of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide. Many Palestinian women have lost their lives during these attacks, many have been forcibly displaced from Gaza, and they are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence crimes. The threats to women's reproductive health as a result of Israeli attacks have become a major source of concern at the international level. Numerous hospitals and health centres in Gaza have been destroyed and rendered non-functional due to Israeli attacks. Additionally, restrictions on access to fuel, electricity, medicine, and water have forced pregnant women to give birth in unsanitary and dangerous conditions where urgent intervention is not possible. In addition to health problems, women who have lost their livelihoods and safe living spaces due to the attacks are exposed to economic, social, and security threats. The problems faced by women require solutions not only at an individual level but also at a familial and societal level, as children and the elderly also depend on women's survival as a result of gendered power relations.

Almost half of the Palestinian population has spent a significant part of their lives in conflict. Women and men living in Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation have been significantly affected by acts of violence. However, due to the combination of Israeli occupation and the patriarchal structure of Palestinian society, Palestinian women have been subjected to a higher intensity of violence both in the public and private spheres. While most occupation policies may not be specifically directed at women, the effects of these policies vary due to the unequal access to rights and resources resulting from women's positions in society and gender power relations, thus increasing violence against women. As a result, Palestinian women face dual violence and oppression, both from Israeli occupation and patriarchal social structures.

Palestinian women are intimidated by fear and threats and are subjected to restrictions on their movements through policies implemented by Israeli security forces. Israeli occupation creates a constant fear and security threat in the lives of Palestinian women. Night raids, unlawful arrests, and sudden blockage of streets by security forces, especially in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, are common. In addition, checkpoints on roads restrict Palestinian women's access to water, food, and health supplies. Restrictions on access to resources also hinder psychological support and access to safe spaces for women experiencing domestic violence. In general, these checkpoints significantly limit the movement of Palestinians, leading to problems in accessing education, health services, and livelihoods. For example, Palestinian female students are regularly harassed or humiliated at checkpoints when going to school, as a result of which families have become reluctant to send their daughters to school. Another example is that Palestinian women cannot often obtain permission from Israeli authorities to go to health centres outside the occupied areas. Pregnant women are kept waiting at checkpoints for extended periods, jeopardizing their health—many women have had to give birth at these checkpoints. Finally, Palestinian women at checkpoints are subjected to sexual abuse.

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Another significant problem faced by Palestinian women under Israeli occupation is the establishment of illegal settlements by the Israeli government on occupied Palestinian territories and the demolition of homes where Palestinians live. This situation constantly brings fear and insecurity into women's daily lives. Women who become homeless or are forced to live in crowded and unhealthy conditions face economic, social, and psychological problems. Another policy is the cancellation of residence permits for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, forcing them to be sent to other regions. In the case of divorce, women lose their residency permits, forcing them to remain in unhappy or abusive marriages to avoid losing contact with their children. Women, therefore, refrain from approaching Israeli authorities when subjected to domestic violence due to fear of displacement.

Despite the pressures and ongoing occupation, women take a stand and demonstrate against the policies of the Israeli state and advocate for human rights. Female journalists also try to make the gendered consequences of the occupation visible on the international stage. However, Palestinian women's rights advocates and female journalists are constantly subjected to harassment, mistreatment, arbitrary arrests, and torture by Israeli security forces. Another significant women's rights advocacy is the implementation of decisions taken under the United Nations Security Council's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda. These decisions provide an important political and legal framework for the protection of women in war, preventing violence against women, and involving women in decision-making processes for peacebuilding. In 2015, more than seventy Palestinian women's civil society organizations came together and adopted a strategy document for the implementation of the WPS Agenda. Despite the distrust of Palestinian women's groups in international law, they are trying to make their voices heard on the international stage by using the framework of the WPS Agenda. Civil society organizations advocate for the implementation of the WPS Agenda to hold the Israeli state accountable for the occupation and human rights violations. These efforts were effective in persuading Palestinian authorities to adopt a national action plan on WPS in 2017. The second national action plan adopted in 2020 included decisions to protect women from occupation and conflict and to include Palestinian women in decision-making processes related to peace. However, the current conflict in Gaza and the ineffectiveness of the international community in achieving a ceasefire silences the voices of Palestinian women and makes it challenging to implement these action plans. On 29 December 2023, South Africa applied to the International Court of Justice, arguing that Israel is breaching its obligations under the Genocide Convention and requested the Court to order provisional measures, including the cessation of military operations. The decision of the Court can be very decisive in creating a strong legal order to stop military actions. In 2024, we will witness the impacts and consequences of the Court decision on the attacks, the sustained backing of Israel by Western nations, and the persistent barriers to humanitarian aid in Gaza.

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Casualty of the Gaza War: The Turkish-Israeli Normalization Process

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The October 7 assault of Hamas on Israel, in which over 1200 people were killed, and over 200 people were taken hostages, upended the already fragile balance of power in the Middle East and put the Palestinian issue back on the agenda of the international community. According to [Gaza Health Ministry](#), over 31 thousand Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its military campaign into Gaza, about two-thirds of the reported deaths being women and children. Calls for an immediate ceasefire have been growing in the international arena amid the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. Famine, winter chill, and the spread of diseases have been threatening the survival of displaced civilians. What is more, as the war rages on, there is a greater risk of the war in Gaza expanding into a wider regional conflict.

Against this background, another casualty of the Gaza War appears to be the tumultuous Turkish-Israeli normalization process. In fact, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan adopted a relatively balanced rhetoric towards Israel in the wake of the October 7 attack, expressing sympathy for Israelis' losses and urging restraint on both sides of the conflict. However, his moderate rhetoric was soon replaced with a harsher tone targeting Israel parallel to the unfolding of the war in Gaza. Erdogan accused Israel of acting as a "terrorist organization" while he defined Hamas as a "[resistance movement](#)" that "stands up against Israel's unlawful occupation of Palestine." In response to Ankara's changing stance, Israel's Ministry of Affairs recalled its diplomats for consultation. Turkey also followed suit. However, unlike previous conflicts, Ankara did not downgrade diplomatic relations with Israel.

As the war in Gaza moves into its sixth month, Israel's military campaign apparently shifts to a lower-intensity phase. Despite growing international pressure and intense diplomatic efforts, calls for a ceasefire have yet to yield results. With the Middle East once again in turmoil, this paper aims to analyze Ankara's changing stance toward Israel and discuss the likely repercussions of the Gaza War on the future of Turkish-Israeli relations.

Turkey's Path to Normalization with Israel

Starting in mid-2020, Turkey has launched a diplomatic charm offensive to mend fences with countries in the Middle East, including Israel, as part of a broader foreign policy reset. This policy shift has been driven by both geopolitical imperatives (largely to overcome its regional isolation as well as to ameliorate ties with Washington) and domestic concerns (the need for foreign investment to reverse the economic collapse).

Israeli President Isaac Herzog's [visit](#) to Ankara in March 2022 ushered in a new page in bilateral relations. During the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in September, Erdogan sat down with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the first time in person, and the two leaders agreed to coordinate mutual visits. Indeed, Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Alparslan Bayraktar, was planning to visit Israel in October. However, Hamas's attack on October 7 became a turning point in the normalization process between Turkey and Israel that had been ongoing for two years. With the recalling of diplomats, the rapprochement between the two countries, in a way, has been put on hold.

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Domestic Concerns Interfere with Foreign Policy

Turkish society has always been sensitive to the Palestinian issue. What sets the AKP government apart from its predecessors has been its increasingly pro-Hamas stance on the Palestinian issue, particularly from 2006 onwards. President Erdogan often underlines that it considers Hamas a legitimate political movement that won the elections. In this regard, Ankara's pro-Hamas stance in the recent Gaza War is not surprising. President Erdogan's balanced rhetoric in the early stages suggests that Ankara was, indeed, willing to uphold the normalization process that it had invested in politically.

However, President Erdogan faced increasing challenges in maintaining a balanced stance once Israel intensified its offensive in Gaza. As criticism mounted from his party and political rivals amid a rising civilian death toll, Erdogan eventually shifted to a harsher tone towards Israel. This adjustment was primarily aimed at bolstering domestic support for the upcoming local elections in March. By championing the Palestinian cause, Erdogan is seeking to consolidate his constituency and, at the same time, winking at the "global south," challenging the perceived dysfunction of the US-led international order and institutions like the United Nations in restraining Israel's actions in the Gaza War. While this policy shift might secure votes in local elections, its payoff on the foreign policy front appears limited.

In the early stages of the conflict, Turkey offered to mediate between Hamas and Israel for a ceasefire and prisoner exchange and affirmed its readiness to assume a guarantor role in Gaza to help de-escalate the situation. However, it was unrealistic to expect Israel to accept a ceasefire in the wake of the October 7 attacks, which triggered the collective trauma of the Holocaust, without exacting revenge from Hamas. Also, one must add that Turkey does not have economic or political leverage over Hamas (be it financial aid or the transfer of logistics...etc.), as Qatar or Egypt has, in compelling Hamas leadership to agree to ceasefire terms. Still, the fact that their mediation efforts were ignored caused frustration on the Turkish side. Yet, by shifting to a way too pro-Hamas position, Ankara locked itself out of future mediation efforts, undermining its reliability in Israel's eyes. As a result, diplomatic initiatives for a prisoner exchange between Hamas and Israel have been mainly led by Qatar and Egypt.

Ankara's Scenarios on the Post-war Settlement in Gaza

President Erdogan's recent policy shift in rhetoric rests on the assumptions that a) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political career will soon end and b) the complete destruction of Hamas is an unrealistic goal. Long-term developments may validate Erdogan's stance, as public accountability for the shortcomings in the October 7 attack could impact Netanyahu's shaky hold on power after the war. However, predicting this outcome is challenging due to the democratic process. As long as Netanyahu remains in power, Turkey's effectiveness in resolving the Palestinian issue is likely to be hindered.

As for the annihilation of Hamas, the experience of post-9/11 military campaigns of the U.S. has underscored that combating terrorism requires addressing the underlying factors that drive individuals to resort to violence. In this context, while military force may succeed in curtailing Hamas's military capabilities, eradicating the movement politically proves to be an

unrealistic goal. The effective path to weaken Hamas involves revitalizing and strengthening the Palestinian Authority to restore its legitimacy. If the Palestinian Authority were to organize new elections, there exists the possibility for Hamas to rebrand itself under a different name and participate in a future administrative structure. Turkey hedges its bet on this possibility and therefore, it throws its weight behind reconciling rival Palestinian political factions. Still, the unfolding of events may not align with Ankara's desired direction. It is too soon to predict how the power struggle will play out in Palestinian politics.

The way forward

The recent fallout between Turkey and Israel over the War in Gaza is likely to persist into 2024, further complicating their bilateral relations. In light of the potential escalation of tensions in the Red Sea region, Ankara is willing to offer its good offices to address the conflict. Feeling marginalized from regional diplomatic initiatives, Turkey has initiated direct talks with [Hamas leaders](#), even if these efforts have not yielded a concrete result. Additionally, Turkey is seeking to mobilize international public opinion to urge Israel to agree to a ceasefire. In this context, Turkey has shown steadfast [support](#) for South Africa's appeal to the International Court of Justice to order Israel to stop the war, alleging that Israel had violated the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in its assaults in Gaza.

Ankara is on the other hand, preparing for the day after the war and is hoping to play a substantial role in assisting the security and reconstruction of Gaza. At a time when Western countries, particularly the US and the European Union EU, are not so enthusiastic about channeling their resources to the Middle East, what regional actors have to offer gain importance. However, Turkey's involvement in any post-war plans in Gaza is contingent upon Israel's consent, requiring a potential normalization between Turkey and Israel. We can expect Turkish policymakers to moderate their rhetoric toward Israel in the upcoming months if they want to get involved in the diplomatic processes.

Regardless, the War in Gaza has taken its toll on the shaky (reluctant) Turkish-Israeli normalization process, undermining mutual trust. Bilateral relations are likely to continue on a low-profile basis until the War in Gaza ends. In the meantime, the status quo after the Mavi [Marmara Incident of 2010](#) will reign and the apparent discrepancy between Ankara's rhetoric and practice toward Israel is likely to endure. Despite occasional rhetorical flare-ups, Ankara will be seeking to uphold its trade relations with Israel- Turkey's recent removal of Israel from the [export target list](#) remains symbolic when commercial flights and trade shipments continue unabated- and explore opportunities to enhance its role as a mediator in the region. The uncertainties surrounding Israeli politics and the escalating risks of a regional conflagration present challenges in making future predictions. However, as long as the parameters set by the [Abraham Accords of 2020](#) remain intact and that the rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf countries resume after the Gaza War, Turkey will find itself shifting to a relatively balanced approach in its relations with Israel, facing regional constraints. Having changed course several times in the last decade, repairing bilateral relations may take even longer than anticipated by Ankara.

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Key Trends Shaping the Middle East: Impact on Gulf Geopolitics and Women

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Looking back on the events of 2023 reveals a tumultuous and tragic period for the Middle East, with the Gulf countries playing a prominent role in hosting high-profile summits and offering diplomatic and humanitarian support on diverse challenges. The year saw a devastating natural disaster in Turkey and Syria, a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, a crackdown on protestors and women in Iran, and an ongoing conflict between Israel and the Gaza Strip with severe consequences for women and children. Despite some of these developments occurring outside the Gulf countries' borders, they continue to influence the political and security landscape of the Gulf region.

The year began with a moment of optimism and diplomatic achievements as Saudi Arabia and Iran restored diplomatic relations, facilitated by China, seven years after severing ties. This event was geopolitically significant on both regional and global level. The unexpected diplomatic shift not only normalized ties between two regional rivals but also contributed to easing tensions in the broader Gulf region, with Gulf countries viewing it as a move towards stability and prosperity benefiting all parties.

Looking beyond diplomatic matters, Iran's rapprochement with Saudi Arabia cannot be read without considering its "women, life, freedom" movement. Facing internal discontent, economic challenges, and negative global sentiments, Iran's rapprochement with Saudi Arabia is seen as an attempt by regime insiders to alleviate at least one of the many crises the country has faced in the past four decades. While Iran took a significant step in foreign policy, it continued to face challenges on the domestic realms as the country was embroiled in protests after the Iranian parliament approved a bill to impose heavier penalties on women who refuse to wear the mandatory headscarf in public and who support them. The decision came just days after the anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who had been detained by the morality police for violating the country's dress code. Her death in custody ignited months of protests in which many called for the overthrow of the Iranian regime.

The Middle East has a long history of women's struggle for fundamental rights, and against military occupation, patriarchy, terrorism, domestic violence and poor working conditions. Thus, Palestinian women also have their own long history of fighting for their rights. However, the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza Strip has been disproportionately affecting Palestinian women ever before, marking a crisis not seen in the region for decades.

The unprecedented war that flared between Israel and Hamas on October 7 has dramatically increased geopolitical tensions across the Middle East, with far-reaching effects on international relations and human rights. Human Rights Watch has reported that the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza is disproportionately affecting women and girls in specific and devastating ways. A report from the UN reveals that women and children make up 70 percent of the deaths in Gaza. Amid all the atrocities of the Gaza war, the anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace, and Security" was marked in October under the shadow of the plights of the women in Gaza and elsewhere in the regional crises. The resolution was adopted, recognizing the role of women in strengthening their participation in decision-making, ending sexual violence and impunity, and strengthening prospects for sustainable peace. Despite several resolutions aimed at addressing gender-based

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violence during wars, the international community's inadequacy is glaring, particularly given the staggering numbers of casualties among women that these international legal mechanisms were designed to protect.

Since the eruption of the crisis, Gulf countries have been working to de-escalate and prevent the crisis from sparking a catastrophic regional war dragging in Iranian allies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, armed groups in Syria and Houthi rebels in Yemen. This is important for their stability and security as well. Yet while the Gulf countries agree on the need for an immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access to Gaza, their responses to the crisis have markedly differed. Some have maintained their traditional posture of supporting Palestinian rights and calling for a two-state solution. But those who normalized relations with Israel during the administration of U.S. former president Donald Trump find themselves in an uncomfortable position as Israel pummels the crowded territory and protestors throng the streets across the Arab and Muslim worlds. The Gaza war has even led Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to visit Saudi Arabia for the first time to participate in the extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit on Gaza.

The Gaza war has also sparked protests in the Gulf states, which do not have protest-friendly spaces due to their conservative political culture. In Kuwait and Qatar, thousands of citizens and residents gathered to protest Israel and show solidarity with Palestinians. Omanis have also protested against the Israeli assault on Gaza. In Bahrain also, demonstrators have staged angry protests not only against the war in Gaza but also against their country's normalization with Israel. Similar rallies have not been reported in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The Gaza war comes at a time of a series of crises across the Arab world in Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. Although the Saudi-Iranian deal relieved the regional states, the ongoing regional crises, most importantly in Gaza, and their repercussions pose a disquieting risk for the regional stability, with women and children bearing a disproportionate burden of these crises.

The world is more polarized than ever, with crises across numerous countries, and maintaining optimism is difficult. However, there are developments that inspire hope. For the first time in its history, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), on International Women's Day, hosted an inaugural ceremony in Riyadh to celebrate the achievements of Gulf women and underscore their importance in the development of the GCC states. At the reception, women from six GCC states, who were pioneers in the fields of diplomacy, economy and science, were given honorary awards for their contributions. In recent years, women's participation in decision-making processes has increased significantly in the Gulf states and remarkable gains have been made in regards to women's rights. Witnessing this in the shadow of all the crises in the region gives some hope.

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Mexico's Female-led Presidential Race Cements Women's Political Representation

*Selin Levi**

June 2, 2024 will be remembered as a historic day for Mexican elections. There has never been a wider range of candidates for office or more voters on the electoral roll. Both the main opposition alliance and the ruling Morena Party fielded female presidential candidates. Thus, it is almost certain that a woman would hold the office of presidency for the first time in Mexico.

There are certain similarities between the two politicians. Claudia Sheinbaum is a physicist who holds a doctorate in environmental engineering. Xóchitl Gálvez started her own IT company after graduating from computer engineering school. Political scientist Javier Aparicio of Mexico City speculates that the campaign may be smart. Though they are both socially progressive, neither of them has an overtly feminist agenda.

Sheinbaum is more influential. She has been involved in politics from her time as a student and served in Andrés Manuel López Obrador's (AMLO) government during his early 2000s mayoralty of Mexico City. In 2018, she was elected to the position of mayor, which is comparable to that of state governor. Sheinbaum has pledged to carry out AMLO's "Fourth Transformation", an eccentric combination of ideas that includes bolstering support for fossil energy and increasing social giveaways. She joined the audience in chanting "It's an honor to be with Obrador" during a campaign event on August 27. She supports having elected judges and limiting the electoral body's independence, much like AMLO does. Mostly those with lower incomes and a small percentage of social progressives make up Morena's devoted base. A coalition of Morena, the Partido del Trabajo (PT), and the Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM) is fielding Sheinbaum.

However, it appears from her tenure as mayor that she would be different from President Obrador in a few areas. She is probably going to approach policymaking in a technical manner and deal with her opponents less harshly. Sheinbaum promises to "accelerate" the green transition while adhering to the president's objective of backing state-owned energy corporations. Something that her mentor has not given that much attention. She acknowledges that businesses want clarity in their private talks. Under President Obrador, this was absent. Furthermore, she argues that if Mexican companies are willing to become more integrated with the US, they must guarantee that workers benefit from the relocation of production to Mexico.

On the other hand Gálvez is a less known figure, but she is no stranger to politics. She is supported by a coalition of parties that were once bitter rivals. She led the Indigenous Affairs Institute during Vicente Fox's administration and joined the Senate in 2018. Thus, Sheinbaum will have to compete with a formidable opponent. From the beginning of June 2023, when President Obrador started criticizing Gálvez in his morning briefings, her popularity has increased. That convinced her to run for president. On the day of her announcement as a presidential candidate, thousands flocked to the capital to witness her in action during a demonstration. Her use of jargon and her pledge of a government free of *huevones, rateros, y pendejos*, which means loafers, thieves, and idiots, have contributed to her reputation as a maverick. She is also descended from a low-income indigenous family. She is very skilled at making headlines. She protested Morena's attempt to weaken the electoral body last year by dressing like a dinosaur and arguing that it would return the nation to the prehistoric era. Although specifics are still unknown, Gálvez has stated that she will enhance public services. In addition to encouraging nearshoring and reforming the national oil

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corporation Pemex to attract foreign investment and promote the development of renewable energy, Gálvez would increase taxes on the rich. She would carry out several of AMLO's initiatives, such as building a land corridor to rival the Panama Canal, and work to improve the occasionally tense ties with the United States. Additionally, she would place a high priority on courses teaching tech and creative skills like coding. Her goals are to educate Mexicans about robots and artificial intelligence (AI) and to establish a state-run company to research green energy sources. Many of people who have rejected AMLO's attempts to discredit opponents and overhaul organizations like the National Electoral Institute, such as members of Mexico's sizable middle class, whom she is campaigning against, hold favorable opinions of Gálvez. She draws some environmental voters as well as people who run or are employed by small companies.

Whoever wins will have a difficult journey ahead, and is not likely to experience AMLO's high levels of popularity and acceptability. Enacting policy changes and passing reforms may therefore very challenging. Furthermore, policymaking may be hampered by the prospect of a split legislature and a greater dependence on the military forces, primarily to address demands for democratic governance in the face of a more devoid civilian bureaucracy. Additionally, the question of citizen protection would become more pressing and harder to ignore under a weaker government.

In light of this, Sheinbaum would be better served advocating for a centrist stance regarding the military's growth, which would entail reorienting the goal of the armed forces to address the alarmingly high levels of violence and the ensuing the risk that comes from the rising number of organized crime groups.

More crucially, even though Sheinbaum could symbolize a more technical and enlightened standpoint on politics than AMLO, she will find it difficult to distance herself from AMLO's most pressing concerns. Since his tenure, AMLO's version of "paranoid nationalism" has been prominently manifested across important policy arenas, particularly energy and trade issues. This helps to clarify the appalling carelessness and neglect surrounding the energy transition, as billions of dollars were poured into the Federal Electricity Commission and Petróleos Mexicanos, two state-run entities. It makes sense that energy policy is one of the key areas of contention between the nation's opposing political parties and is certain to be in the public eye both domestically and internationally.

The 20-reform package was handed to Congress on February 5th by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the current president of Mexico. The majority, including eliminating independent regulators and electing judges by public vote, have already been rejected. One measure that will be more difficult for the opposition to thwart in the lead-up to June elections. Even if Congress decides not to spend money on pensions, all of this will place the incoming president in a difficult situation. It appears that Claudia Sheinbaum, the candidate for the ruling party, Morena, will prevail. She and opposition alliance candidate Xóchitl Gálvez both vow they would continue to pay for cash handouts. Even if Mr. López Obrador succeeds in finishing his massive projects before he leaves office, his successor would still have to reallocate funds to abandoned ports and highways.

The first elected female president of Mexico is probably going to take over an inheritance of resource nationalism and economic protectionism. Sheinbaum's ability to support a fossil fuel-focused, government-led energy plan is still in doubt, particularly in the light of her experience as a prize-winning climate scientist. At this point, though, she is determined that Mexico has to be fully freed from the shackles of "neoliberal" influences. She has even raised the prospect of constructing an additional oil refinery. Nevertheless, as noted in the Moreno Party's official internal candidate selection process, it could be ideal to maintain her policy preferences vague while still being close to AMLO's "everlastingly plan."

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A Review of Southeast Asia: What did Women Experience in 2023?

*Yeşim Deniz**

The UN Women Gender Snapshot 2023 Report emphasizes the need to take decisive and concrete steps for gender equality and strengthening women's status by 2030. It emphasizes the imperative for every woman and girl to have equitable rights, opportunities, and representation. If this is not achieved, the report predicts that over 340 million women and girls will endure poverty by 2030. In this regard, in Southeast Asia, pivotal themes such as violence against women, education, representation, organized crime, and cybercrime are set to take center stage in 2023.

As the prominent regional organization in Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has taken significant initiatives to promote gender equality. In this context, ASEAN accepted a Regional Action Plan to implement the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in December 2022. The ASEAN Regional Plan of Action emphasizes the necessity of women's full and equal participation in peace and security issues to foster peaceful and equitable societies. This step taken by ASEAN represents significant progress in member states' efforts towards women's participation and leadership in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and sustainability in the region.

On July 6-7, 2023, the ASEAN WPS Summit took place in Indonesia's Yogyakarta province with the theme "High-Level Dialogue to Improve the Implementation of the Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace, and Security." The summit underlined the importance of women's participation in peace processes to enhance the effectiveness, legitimacy, and sustainability of peace. It was stated that women possess a natural sensitivity that can contribute to creating a sense of mutual respect and comprehensiveness among various groups. During the summit, key elements for effective coordination, monitoring, and financing to improve the WPS agenda were discussed. The contribution of UN Women and international partners such as Australia, Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the USA for the implementation of the ASEAN WPS Regional Plan of Action was emphasized.

On December 6, 2023, Andy Yentriyani, Chairman of the Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women, called for the improvement of a joint movement to increase gender equality and cease violence against women in the country. She also emphasized that the decision adopted by the Indonesian House of Representatives regarding sexual violence crimes marked a significant turning point for the protection of women from violence. This decision, reached after a six-year negotiation process, established penalties of up to 12 years in prison for sexual abuse within and outside of marriage, up to 15 years for sexual exploitation crimes, and up to 9 years for forced marriages, including child marriages.

Factors such as the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, inadequate quality and access to education, and girls dropping out of school due to early marriage contribute to the deprivation of education for girls in Southeast Asia. At the World Education Forum held in 2022, British Development Minister Andrew Mitchell emphasized that gender equality not only fosters freedom but also enhances prosperity and strengthens

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global security. He announced the United Kingdom's commitment to allocate \$37.8 million in funding to improve educational opportunities for women and girls [in Southeast Asia](#).

Another significant challenge for women in Southeast Asia is the issue of representation. According to the Global WPS Index 2023, which assesses the situation of women in three categories - inclusion, justice, and security - it was revealed that the representation of women in the Philippines has declined compared to the [data from 2017](#). Despite the Philippines rising three places to rank 16th among 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report for 2023, published by the [World Economic Forum](#), the number of women decision-makers in the country remains lower than that of men. During the Women's Leadership and Democracy forum organized by the UN, it was highlighted that women's participation in politics is notably low in the Philippines. The primary reason for this gender disparity in politics appears to be the socially prioritized domestic role assigned to women. Dr. Leila Joudane, UNFPA Philippines Country Representative, stressed that women's representation in leadership is crucial for fostering a more equitable and fair society. She asserted that women's participation is vital for the Philippines to achieve sustainable development and reach its full potential. Dr. Joudane emphasized the importance of having women at decision-making tables to protect the rights of women and girls and combat gender [inequality](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges faced by women and girls, who are already vulnerable groups in the region. In Malaysia, for instance, domestic violence cases surged by 42% in 2021 compared to the previous year, attributed to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 [pandemic](#). The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report revealing that organized crime gangs forced hundreds of thousands of people in Southeast Asia into online criminal activities, subjecting them to threats to their security and serious violations and abuses. The report estimates that at least 120 thousand people in Myanmar and nearly 100 thousand people in Cambodia have been coerced into [online fraud](#). With increased access to the internet, cyber violence against women and girls has become a global problem. Obtaining personal information, cyberstalking, pornography, gender-based insults and attacks, and rape and death threats can be counted among cybercrimes against women. In addressing these issues, the WPS agenda emerges as a crucial framework to enhance cooperation among ASEAN in preventing violence [against women](#).

In sum, despite their successes, ASEAN member states face individual and collective challenges regarding peace and security. As of 2023, issues such as violence against women, education, and representation remain prevalent on the regional agenda, influenced by global events like the COVID-19 pandemic and the domestic policies of member states. Nevertheless, positive developments have also shaped the region in 2023. The implementation of the Regional Plan of Action by ASEAN signifies significant progress towards gender equality. In Indonesia, the acceptance of the decision on sexual violence crimes was received positively. Such advancements supporting gender equality play a crucial role in fostering sustainable peace and prosperity in the region.

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Kosovo's Bumpy Road to EU and NATO Memberships and Relations with Türkiye

*Pınar Dost**

Vjosa Osmani was clearly one of the busiest women leaders in international politics in 2023. 5th President of Kosovo since April 2021, Osmani previously held positions of speaker of the Parliament and of acting president. A strong supporter of Kosovo's integration into the EU and NATO, President Osmani is the face of Kosovo's diplomacy. A strong supporter of Kosovo-Serbia normalization, she called on Serbia many times to recognize crimes committed during the Kosovo War (February 1998- June 1999) and to apologize.

In 2023, she had to pursue a very active diplomacy and regularly meet world leaders, EU and NATO officials, especially following tensions in the north escalating once again in the Balkans in May. Kosovo government's attempts to maintain control and authority in northern Kosovo mostly populated by ethnic Serbs, and their insistence on using old Serbian citizenship cards and license plates have been creating issues of disputes for a while. Following the local elections in April boycotted by ethnic Serbs and the election of ethnic Albanian mayors in four municipalities in the north, riots were organized by Serbian militants trying to prevent them from taking office. Following attacks by Serbian protestors on KFOR (Kosovo Force) in May and clashes between Serb armed paramilitary troops and Kosovo police which led to violence in September, concerns about a renewal of war between Kosovo and Serbia increased.

These developments were the latest manifestations of unresolved deeper problems between the two communities and countries that have been going through since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Despite the declaration of its independence from Serbia in 2008, Kosovo has been unable to attain full international recognition due to Russia's support for Serbia in the United Nations Security Council. Additionally, the fact that five countries within NATO and the EU (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) do not recognize Kosovo's independence, hinders the country's full legitimacy and its integration under the political and security umbrellas of Euro-Atlantic organizations.

Notably, Serbia does not recognize Kosovo. Furthermore, Serbian officials neither acknowledged the war crimes nor offered apologies to Kosovars, despite the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)'s recognition of the war crimes that were committed by high-level Serbian law enforcement authorities in 1999. Moreover, Serbia's current President Aleksandar Vučić, held the position of Minister of Information of the government run by Slobodan Milošević, a key perpetrator associated with the 1999 Srebrenica genocide.

Türkiye's role in the conflict

The Balkan countries have historically been important for Türkiye's national security and following the end of the Cold War and the breakup of Yugoslavia, the country supported fragile Balkan countries and contributed to NATO operations and peacekeeping missions in the region. [Turkish parliamentary debates in 1998](#) during the Kosovo War showed that most Turkish political parties opted for the territorial integrity of Kosovo and suggested pursuing an assertive foreign policy and some even suggested that the Turkish army intervene to support Kosovo. Many politicians underlined similarities with the situation in Cyprus and argued that based on shared Ottoman past and

* *The Atlantic Council Türkiye Program and IFEA*

cultural affinities, Kosovo was no different from Cyprus and therefore Türkiye should play an active role. In 1999, Turkish soldiers joined NATO bombings which resulted in the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) expanded Türkiye's influence economically, politically, militarily but also culturally in the Western Balkans. Being among the first countries to recognize Kosovo, Türkiye invested in regional mediation efforts and initiated trilateral talks with Bosnia Herzegovina and Serbia in 2009 and Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia in 2010. AKP foreign-policy leaders strongly supported Western Balkan countries' Euro-Atlantic integration and intensified economic relations while encouraging Turkish investments in the region. Türkiye has also been keen on defense cooperation supporting Western Balkan countries' security needs including in Serbia and Kosovo. With a free trade agreement signed in 2013, Türkiye is the 7th largest investor in Kosovo and was ahead of Germany (11%) and China (10%) with a 15% share in Kosovo's total imports in 2022. Turkish exports to Kosovo increased by 48% between 2019 and 2022.

Since 1999, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) has been supporting the rule of law in Kosovo within the United Nations Mission in the country (UNMIK). Türkiye has been contributing to EULEX and KFOR for many years and is actively supporting the normalization process between Serbia and Kosovo. Following the unrest in the north in May, per NATO's request Türkiye sent additional troops to assist KFOR and for the first time in October 2023 took over the command of the peacekeeping mission where it has the second largest contribution with at least 780 soldiers. Especially since 2021, after clashes in the north began, Kosovo has been strengthening its security forces to comply with NATO requirements and to ensure its security. Türkiye has been supporting the Kosovo Security Force (KSF) with regular grants, yearly donations, armored vehicles, military training and most recently delivered to Kosovo five Bayraktar TB2 drones.

The way forward

The year 2023 was also significant in marking the progress in the context of the ongoing EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Compliance with the Agreement on the path to normalization between Kosovo and Serbia, signed in February 2023, is a mandatory step for both countries to become EU members.

When Serbia became an official EU candidate country in 2012, there were expectations that the country would recognize Kosovo, yet the, internal issues within the EU and the enlargement debates, as well as Russia's influence in the region hindering Serbia's path toward the EU and NATO accession and the resolution of its bilateral disputes, all stalled the anticipated progress.

Kosovo has been acknowledged as a potential candidate country for membership by the EU, and in 2016, the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Kosovo became operational. By 2018, Kosovo was officially included in the EU's expansion plans for six Western Balkan countries. And as of January 2024, Kosovo finally achieved the long-awaited visa liberalization. As underlined by the EU Commission president von der Leyen, the EU growth plan for Western Balkans can only succeed if normalization between both countries happens.

Regarding the normalization process, a remaining issue, from the Brussels Agreement of 2013 and of the recent agreement of 2023, is the creation of the Association/Community of Serbian-Majority Municipalities (ASMM) requested by the Serbs. ASMM having authority in the areas of education, urban planning, economic development, and health would provide Serbians rights to self-government. Kosovo has not applied this clause so far fearing that this autonomous body could create division along ethnic lines within the country. Serbia on its part, needs to “de facto” recognize Kosovo. Both the EU and the US are putting pressure on both sides to implement the agreements.

While there is no explicit recognition of Kosovo in the agreement, it is stated that both parties need to respect the other's “independence, autonomy and territorial integrity, the right of self-determination...”. The agreement also

underlines that “Serbia will not object to Kosovo’s membership in any international organisation.” This means that Serbia won’t be able to block Kosovo’s integration into NATO and the Council of Europe.

Yet, there is always the possibility that Kosovo’s EU path may be similar to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. as highlighted in the media Germany and France promised to fasten Serbia’s EU membership process if it recognizes Kosovo’s independence. But this this may end up with Kosovo never becoming an EU member. Even though Article 5 of the normalization agreement states that “neither party will block, nor encourage others to block, the other Party’s progress in their respective EU path based on their own merits”, Serbia as an EU member can always try to block Kosovo’s integration into the EU in the future. Therefore, the EU officials need to be make sure that the EU integration path for both countries enhances cooperation and dialogue between them and not widen existing divides.

Serbia formally became a participating state in NATO’s Partnership for Peace programme in 2006. This is not the case for Kosovo, which aspires to become a member country. As also highlighted by NATO’s Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in November 2023 during a joint press conference with President Osmani, this requires a unanimous decision by all NATO Allies.

Furthermore, unrest hasn’t stopped in the north of Kosovo. In January, ethnic Serbs held a petition to remove from office four ethnic Albanian mayors. As President Osmani underlined at an interview in Istanbul in December 2023, the key to security in the Western Balkans would be to integrate Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina into NATO soon and let them join Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia to prevent Russia from opening a new front against the West in the Western Balkans and ensuring long-term stability and peace in the region. And Türkiye can always play an important role in encouraging Serbia to stop attacking its neighbors and accepting that Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina and Montenegro are there to stay as independent countries.

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A Peaceful Woman Opposition Figure in The European Parliament: Clare Daly

*Yağmur Tuğba Karagülle**

Since October 7, 2023 when Hamas launched an operation against Israel there is an ongoing military conflict between Palestinians and Israel within the borders of Gaza. Right after the conflict erupted, the European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen expressed support for Israel on behalf of the whole EU, which some members of the European Parliament disagreed with.

Clare Daly, an Irish member of the European Parliament is one of the opposition figures against Commissioner von der Leyen. A member of the Left Group within the European Parliament, Daly's opposition towards von der Leyen actually started before the Gaza conflict. In May, von der Leyen congratulated Israel for its 75th year of independence with a short video. This video sparked outrage among Palestinians and EU staff who supported Palestinians by claiming it was a "Zionist myth" while repeating the invasion of Palestine started by Israel (Abunimah, 2023). Among those EU officials, Clare Daly explicitly stated that what Ursula von der Leyen said about Israel and Palestine were 'lies'. She started posting one-minute videos about the 'lies' von der Leyen tells after the post that von der Leyen shared to commemorate Israel's independence. Daly tells the history of the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian lands from the Palestinian perspective by refuting von der Leyen. Indeed, she claimed what von der Leyen did by commemorating was "a provocation and a deliberate and cruel insult to millions of Palestinians all over the world". Along with the video she posted, Daly also stated that von der Leyen was only an appointee who does not democratically represent anyone. After this first tweet and video, she continued to publish more on the same topic.

Right after the Israeli-Palestinian conflict started in October, the European Commissioner tweeted that the terrorist group Hamas struck Israel, therefore Israel has the right to defend itself, and the EU stands with it. Her tweets, again, sparked outrage within the European Parliament. Mick Wallace, another Irish member of the European Parliament tweeted that the vast majority of the EU does not support Israel but they stand with the Palestinian people. Similarly, Clare Daly tweeted repeating that Ursula von der Leyen was not elected and had no power to determine the EU foreign policy, she also told von der Leyen to shut up, in her tweet. Furthermore, Clare Daly underlined that what happens in Gaza is genocide and it is the genocide of Europe as well. Daly also underlined that the Commissioner did not call for a ceasefire for the conflict to stop. At the same time, she stated that this genocide is being carried out with American and European support with their weapons in their names. The European Commissioner did not respond to those tweets and critiques, however, she left the European Parliament debate on the Israel-Hamas conflict without answering questions, ten days later. Usually, after the debate the European Commissioner stays longer to hear the contributions and questions of the members of the European Parliament. She received various criticisms for leaving, and the criticizers included some members of the European Parliament calling for her resignation.

Apart from the Hamas-Israel conflict, Daly repeatedly sided with peace for the Russian-Ukrainian conflict which has been ongoing for over a year. In numerous interviews she had with different magazines and newspapers, she stated that the West is arming Ukraine to keep the war going rather than to end it. Indeed, she delivered many

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speeches at the European Parliament about the conflicts around the world with their links to Europe citing the official numbers of money spent for militarization.

In conclusion, since the start of the Hamas-Israel conflict, Daly became a more popular figure in social media, known for her tweets accusing von der Leyen of genocide and not representing the European Union. The European Commissioner has not responded to any of these accusations also coming from the other members of the European Parliament. Yet, she has not changed her attitude about siding with Israel, either. This division between the official stances of some European Union member states and the public opinion of the majority of their society, as pointed out by Daly and other members of the European Parliament, raised the question of the representativeness of the institutions of the union. Because, as Daly argues, while the society of the European Union wants a ceasefire peacefully, the European Union still needs to address the issue from this perspective which has failed so far. Apart from the discussion related to the European Union's democratic deficiency and representativeness, the tweets and videos of Clare Daly about the Israel-Hamas conflict and her arguments related to the Russian-Ukrainian war highlighted her stance and peacefulness.

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A Kissinger Obituary

*Ayşegül Gökalp Kutlu**

Henry Kissinger, perhaps the most iconic figure in US foreign policy of the 20th century, marked his 100th birthday on May 27, 2023, before passing away on November 29 of the same year. Throughout 2023, Kissinger's life, policy decisions, and his statement [advocating for negotiations with Russia](#) to avert a potential world war amidst the Russia-Ukraine War, dominated the news in the past year.

Born in Germany in 1923, Kissinger immigrated to the USA with his family in 1938, escaping Nazi persecution of Jews. From the age of 16, he worked in a factory during the day and attended high school at night. When the US entered World War II and Kissinger was drafted into the army, he was still working during the day, studying at university at night, and was on his way to becoming an accountant. During World War II, Kissinger served in the US army as a translator and in military intelligence, thanks to his fluency in German. He was deployed to [Germany in 1944](#); where his language skills and cultural understanding led him to assume managerial roles in local units captured by the USA. He played a role in the liberation of the Hannover-Ahlem concentration camp in 1945. Describing his time in the army as a transformative experience that deepened his sense of American identity (Isaacson, 1992: 695), Kissinger remained in Germany for an additional year after the war, lecturing American army officers on strategies for identifying Nazis in disguise and establishing civilian governance. He enrolled at Harvard University in 1947 and completed his bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in Political Science. Over the following 17 years, he also served as a professor at Harvard University. His doctoral thesis, "A World Restored", advocated for a foreign policy centered on a balance of power, prioritizing the acquisition of military, economic, or political influence over ideological or moral considerations. The book can be read as an introduction to his career.

After completing his thesis, Kissinger served as the director of a working group on nuclear weapons within the Council on Foreign Relations. His experience here and the book he wrote during this period, "Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy", quickly brought Kissinger to the top among foreign policy intellectuals. He entered the political arena in 1960, serving as senior foreign policy advisor to New York governor Nelson Rockefeller's presidential campaigns in 1960, 1964, and 1968. Although he had been a Republican admirer since his youth, Kissinger advised the Kennedy administration on the 1961 Berlin Crisis and the Johnson administration on the opening of talks with North Vietnam in 1967.

Following Richard Nixon's victory in 1968, Kissinger assumed the role of National Security Advisor, later ascending to the position of Secretary of State, serving in both capacities throughout Nixon's second term and under Gerald Ford. This tenure saw him officially shaping US foreign policy from 1969 to 1977. During this period, Kissinger spearheaded the Nixon administration's groundbreaking efforts to establish relations with China. He played a pivotal role in fostering détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, culminating in the signing of the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. He negotiated a ceasefire agreement with North Vietnamese negotiator Lê Đức Thọ, for a US exit from Vietnam and earning himself and Thọ the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize. In the same year, Kissinger embarked on mediation efforts between Israel, Egypt and Syria, in a bid to resolve the Yom Kippur War. Employing his renowned "shuttle diplomacy", he

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successfully brokered a ceasefire in the region. Though his official tenure ended in 1977, he continued to advise President Jimmy Carter, albeit critiquing his foreign policy decisions, particularly on the Panama Canal Agreement and the Camp David peace process. Despite his disappointment at not receiving official appointments during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, Kissinger remained influential, offering counsel to George W. Bush during the 2003 Iraq War. In the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama advocated for Kissinger's approach to direct diplomacy with adversaries, particularly in dealing with Iran and Syria. Additionally, it was reported that Hillary Clinton sought Kissinger's guidance during her tenure as Secretary of State.

Still, the negative perceptions of US foreign policy held by many across the globe can be traced, in part, to Henry Kissinger's classical realist approach and its enduring legacy. His Realpolitik-oriented foreign policy, as expounded in his influential 1994 book "Diplomacy", prioritizes US interests above all else, often disregarding international norms, values, human rights, and the sovereignty of other nations. This approach has garnered support from both Democratic and Republican political elites but remains highly controversial. During the Vietnam War, Kissinger's belief in leveraging military force to support American diplomacy manifested notably in the 1972 Christmas Bombings in which the US dropped 20,000 tons of bombs over 11 days to coerce North Vietnam back to the negotiating table. Even though North Vietnam resumed negotiations, Lê Đức Thọ later rejected the Nobel Peace Prize, and two members of the Nobel Committee resigned in protest. Furthermore, the USA's covert bombings of Laos and Cambodia during the war, despite not being openly engaged in conflict with these countries, left a devastating impact. Cambodia, in particular, became the most heavily bombed country in history, indirectly paving the way for the rise of the Khmer Rouge regime. Laos turned out to be the most bombed country per capita. Kissinger's prioritizing US interests included supporting military coups that ousted democratically elected governments in Chile and Argentina, turning a blind eye to the atrocities committed by US ally Pakistan in what would later become Bangladesh, and encouraging Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, purportedly for regional stability.

Kissinger exemplifies the traditional image of a diplomat as envisioned in classical diplomacy, where men are presumed to possess the qualities and skills to represent states. In this framework, the diplomat is portrayed as a figure who meticulously controls the flow of information, maintains a stoic demeanor, and strategizes diplomatic maneuvers akin to a game of chess. According to Kissinger, "the statesman manipulates reality, with the primary aim being the survival of the state" (1977: 46). Implicit in this masculine language is his adherence to classical realism and a belief that women have no place in the decision-making processes of state affairs. This sentiment is suggested in his 1972 interview with Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, where he asserted his dominance over all aspects of foreign policy and hinted at being more popular than President Nixon himself. Describing himself as a "lone cowboy," Kissinger portrayed a resolute determination in his actions, driven by a steadfast belief in their necessity and an indifference to public opinion (Isaacson, 477). In the same interview, Kissinger hints that his relationships with starlets and his 'playboy' image were strategic moves aimed at projecting a reassuring image in politics. He employed sexist humor in his political rhetoric and appeared to have internalized the link between diplomacy and masculinity. Thus, his foreign policy can be summarized by another provocative statement attributed to him: "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."

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