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SECURITY FOR WHOM?

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY
IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

EDITORS' NOTE

Dear reader,

Have you ever returned back to a place you used to call home, just to wonder at a familiar yet changed environment? Whether it's the shop that moved, the new furniture in a shared student accommodation kitchen, or even just the change in weather depending on when you left (Lund has looked so different in the snow these past days!)...

We suspect that the magazine you're holding in your very hands at this very moment may incite a similar feeling. UPF's The Perspective magazine is back - just in a slightly different look and with two new Editors-in-Chief on board.

Both of us fresh arrivals to Lund, the past months have been a period of learning, from the importance of fika at any hour of the day and how to operate the coffee machine in the office, to how to organise effective and engaging theme- and article topic discussions.

The result of these, the title of this edition is "Security for whom?" under the theme of "Women, Peace, and Security." Many of the (international) security issues we face today are incredibly broad and exist at wide scales. Focusing on women and gender, as well as their exclusion in our discussion of them, gives direction and purpose. What are

we missing and what issues should be prioritised? Should we focus on the bigger picture or rather the individual experience?

Whether this is your first time reading the magazine or whether you've been around for a while, we welcome you back with open arms. Above all, The Perspective is a team effort, which this first edition hopefully reflects. As editors, we are very proud of the pieces our reporters have produced and equally excited for you to now read them!

Onto many more writings,
Dianne Kok & Ronja Oechsle
Editors-in-Chief



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Interested in contributing to the magazine? Reach us at magazine@upflund.se.



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Protests in Iran © Craig Melville/
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PRESIDENTS' ADDRESS

Dear members,

It is with pleasure we are writing this for the first Perspective Magazine issue of the year. As we are getting closer to December, we have almost finished a full semester's worth of activities, events, articles, shows, and trips together in the association. We would like to start off with thanking everyone who has been part of planning, executing, being present, or taking part of this. It has been such a joy to meet everyone and getting to know so many new people!

This is written right as we have come back from a weekend together with the nine other associations that are also part of SAIA (Swedish Association of International Affairs). Apart from being incredibly fun, productive, and informative, it was also a reminder that what we do in Lund is a part of a country-wide wish from students to do something similar; we all want a place where we can meet people with the same interests as us. That we have been able to do this in Lund for almost a century soon is very special indeed.

The beginning of the semester was very special in many ways, but what stood out the most was the force with which the student life and engagement was coming back after many semesters without fully scaled operations. Being able to take part and offer a space for students to do this really reinforced how important associations like UPF are, and the reason for why we do all of the work that comes with it. On top of that, all of it really made sure that the fun that UPF brings outweighs the work that we do. Speaking of work, we would both also like to use this opportunity to give an enormous thank you to the Board of UPF. The board members spend a lot of time and energy to ensure that the association continues to be a place for students to take part. This work does not go unnoticed, and we are both impressed with everything that has been done so far in this operational year.

For all members, and all students in Lund, we would like to encourage you to feel welcome in the association and take part in whichever way you want to. We cannot emphasise enough how much we enjoy sharing the association with others. We may be biased, but our office may be the best place in Lund to have a coffee - you never know what kind of fun will come along with it. There is absolutely nothing we like more than having others join us at UPF, so we hope that you all feel incredibly welcome whichever occasion it may be.

Cheers,

Annie Anderek & Kathryn Dolan
President & Vice President



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MARCO RIZZI | ANALYSIS

WOMEN, LIFE, FREEDOM: THE WORDS OF THE IRANIAN PROTEST



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“Anyone who explicitly violates any religious taboo in public besides being punished for the act should also be imprisoned from ten days to two months or should be flogged (74 lashes)”.

These words are taken from Article 638 of Iran’s penal code, introduced to ensure respect for the ethics and values of Islam as deduced from the interpretation of Sharia law. A note to the article directly addresses women and specifies that wearing the hijab incorrectly, or not wearing it at all, is to be considered a violation of a religious taboo, thus entailing the above mentioned penalties. This note dedicated to women and their clothing emphasises how women are deprived of freedom and protection within the Iranian system.

Besides that, it also directly undermines their security, as it allows the moral police to intervene with economic or physical sanctions, up to and including imprisonment, while basing their interventions on often all too discretionary and arbitrary assessments. Due to continued aggression, the days of wearing the veil as a symbol of opposition to the ongoing process of Westernisation and as a symbol of women’s freedom of choice to identify with their own culture, are now over.

The roots of the current human rights situation in Iran has to be found back in the Shia Islamic Revolution. Such an event was a turning point in recent Iranian history as the secular monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was replaced with a theocracy led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, producing a profound social change. Khomeini’s 1979 Iranian religious revolution, which resulted in the birth of the Islamic Republic of Iran, led women to a state of marginalisation and subjugation, with gradual abolitions of rights

and protections. Despite Iran’s participation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the country pursues discriminatory policies, often leading to international accusations of violating fundamental rights. This was further aggravated by the government’s failure to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, confirming the government’s clear stance on gender rights.

The succession to power of ultra-conservative and radical presidents has further allowed the insertion of legislations and regulations against freedom of demonstration, choice and opposition. Moreover, it introduced violent and repressive policies such as corporal punishment, and inhibited all forms of activism.

However, the soul of the Iranian society as a whole, both of women and men, seems to have awoken on the 14th of September 2022, when a clamour to overcome traditional religious laws and interpretations for a future of change and openness occurred stronger than it has ever been before.

This moment represented the beginning of what could be a true internal revolution, even though it originates from a tragic event: on that same day, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old girl, was imprisoned on the charge of having worn the hijab incorrectly. An imprisonment justified by that note to Article 638, which would also seem to have legitimised the subsequent police violence against the young girl: provided for by law and therefore considered legitimate.

Two days after her capture, Mahsa died in the hospital. Images of the girl clearly show the marks of the beating on her body, guilty only of having loosened her hijab. According to reports by the medical team and the government, Mahsa died of hypoxia, due to a past operation; this is an implausible justification both to her family and to the Iranian and international society.

The pictures of the suffering girl, which went viral in a short time, triggered a chain of protests both online and offline, starting with the girl's funeral in her hometown of Saqqez: strikes, and street demonstrations are strong acts aimed at undermining the stability of the government in power. Iranian women are cutting their hair and burning their veils in the wind as a sign of protest, and are supported by men who have decided not to stand by and watch the repression of the 'religious police' any longer.



Woman, Life, Freedom: Protests in London
© Koca Vehbi / Shutterstock

The slogan challenges the patriarchal system and shows opposition to the discriminatory laws of the Islamic Republic, especially with regard to gender inequality and equal rights. The centrality of women's discourse and the Iranian people's sensitivity to the image of women, as well as awareness of regulations that can no longer be tolerated in Iranian society, have given these words more critical weight against

“The slogan challenges the patriarchal system and shows opposition to the discriminatory laws of the Islamic Republic, especially with regard to gender inequality and equal rights.”

the entire socio-political system. In the rest of the world, millions of people regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or religion have joined the cry of struggle and demands with online campaigns and street demonstrations: acts that, despite the distance, make Iranian activists feel less alone. Mahsa's story has reawakened the will of the Iranian population to fight and has spread courage and hope for a future of change. A change which, however, arrives slowly. The government does not seem to acknowledge the demands of its people, continuing a repressive policy, lashing out at activists and demonstrators, carrying out massacres, and imprisoning thousands.

The burnt veils and cut hair are symbols of the struggle of Iranian society along with the photo of Mahsa Amini and hundreds of signs stating “Women, Life, Freedom” that accompany protesters every day in the streets and squares. The veils, free in the wind, are now a symbol of a revolution demanding for a democratic Iran and a future where the hijab is no longer seen as an imposed obligation but as the consequence of a free choice.

The protests in Iran are still ongoing at the time of printing of this magazine. We encourage you to use this article as an incentive to further inform yourself about the current situation. An article about the protests has also been published on www.theperspective.se

A blue European Union flag with yellow stars is the background. In the upper right, there is a red Dutch passport with 'PASPOORT' and 'EUROPESE UNIE' on the cover, and a red Swedish passport with 'EUROPEISKA UNIONEN' and 'SVERIGE PASS' on the cover. A blue pen with 'MSc in European Affairs LUND UNIVERSITY' is lying across the passports. Two small European Union coins are also visible.

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ALBIN EMANUEL BRATTBERG | OPINION

ETHICS OF EXCLUSION: WHAT BORDERS REVEAL ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Deserted refugee camp in Calais © Radek Homola/Unsplash

The climate crisis is commonly characterised as a “transboundary” and “collective” challenge threatening ‘all of humanity’, and linked to an earth-wide era of human activities termed the “anthropocene”. But are we truly all ‘in this together’? In contention, such framings take away any historical context for the emergence of the climate crisis, as well as any politicisation on who and what is responsible, let alone who is impacted. Despite the common biogeochemical causes of greenhouse gas emissions, the nature of the climate crisis is as much boundary-generating as it is trans-boundary.

The climate justice movement has long connected the disproportionality between emissions generated by the minority wealthiest countries and individuals and the burden of emissions-generated climate change on the majority poorest countries and individuals. This global injustice is tied to power, colonial legacies, consumerism, and unequal exchanges produced by capitalist expansion.

Moreover, within and between countries, the negative effects of climate catastrophes and environmental degradation is consistently found to disproportionately affect people of colour. In this way we can begin to understand the climate crisis as a problem of racism. This, in turn, has major implications for understanding Europe’s crisis in humanism and the anti-immigrant sentiment taking hold in countries from Italy to Sweden, as driving forces to escalating the climate crisis.

Bordering practices are fundamental to Europe’s far-right regime, and have both physical, social, and symbolic manifestations with power over political and legal demarcations. Borders inform identities by acting as sites of differential exclusions between individuals. Practices of bordering therefore include integration policies, political economy delineations, security regimes, and biopolitical technologies that manifest in different ways but result in exclusion and discrimination. From this perspective, the climate crisis can be seen as an issue of racism, in which

practices of bordering are crucial points of its reproduction.

One bordering practice is integration and consists of describing, classifying, and monitoring individuals at fault for being in a state of 'misfit' with society, and of course carries stigmatising consequences. This monitoring practice is distinguished from 'native' and 'white' citizens who are always already considered to make up society and constitute the 'neutral' societal benchmark for integration comparisons on 'culture' and 'economic' status.

This division makes 'migrant others' and 'ethnic groups' hypervisible as residing outside society, who can never overcome the deficiencies of being outsiders. This visibility reifies the national consciousness and the white privilege of personhood in European society.

When a problem occurs, be it incarceration, unemployment, prostitution, or addiction, evidently these problems are not ones which exist within society. These are problems of 'integration' and concerns the position and opinions of non-white individuals and their children, who need to be 'brought into society'. Such an equation was constantly made during the Swedish election between law and order and the need for strict migrant policy.

Owing to the manifestation of bordering along societal exclusions and racialized categorizations, society loses touch with any recognition of and responsibility to individuals beyond the national consciousness. It contradicts deeply with climate action, as it pushes those on the margins further outwards, intensifying and extending climate vulnerabilities, and is far removed from the kind of collective ethics needed for international cooperation on the

climate issue. At the same time, policing and the securitisation rhetoric reframe climate change as a problem of overpopulation, food security, and alarms that masses of climate migrants will threaten destination areas, all while targeting 'excess populations' in the Global South.

“Europe’s crisis in humanism is a driving force to escalating the climate crisis.”

Often overlooked is that racism is also fundamental to how industry, production and consumption lifestyles are sustained. This derives from the fact that consumer commodities and high profit margins rely on the cheap price of nature, work, care, food, energy, and lives of those outside the Swedish 'national' project. Globalisation and the global division of labour has long been interrogated for how they extend neo-colonial linkages in the flow of goods and wealth from ex-colonies to the core of Europe and North America.

Many economists have pointed out that the neoliberal market economy externalises the costs of climate damages from the market value of products onto those most burdened by the climate crisis. For instance, the UN Food Systems Summit estimated in 2021 that food is roughly a third cheaper than it would be if such externalities were accounted for in market pricing. Had the price on products been closer to their true value, overconsumption ongoing in countries like Sweden could hardly be sustained.

Border practices are also involved in externalising climate impacts in emissions accounting. The most established international measure of greenhouse gas emissions is one based on

territorial emissions, and is used in both the Paris Agreement and for national “net zero” pledges. Territorial emissions only account for emissions produced within national borders, including exports, but crucially omitting imports.

This means that as richer nations increasingly diminish their industry, ‘outsourcing’ lower margin and environmental degradation to poorer countries, the responsibility for the emissions associated are also displaced to these countries, in a process that has been described as ‘carbon colonialism’. The Swedish Climate Policy Council has, for instance, estimated that the country’s consumption-related emissions are double its territorial emissions.

Similar accounting tactics have been employed in carbon markets through emissions trading and carbon offsetting schemes which treat the South as a carbon dump. These exchanges act as compensations for hindering these countries from achieving an adequate social foundation of development on land used for carbon-reducing projects, transferring the responsibility of mitigation and buying up the exclusive right to pollute.

Perspectives on the climate crisis that remit to the ‘security’ narrative also have wide-ranging biopolitical implications, orienting future climate change as a problem of race. The idea of ‘climate migrant’ mobilises a strikingly ‘white’ positionality of climate fear, characterised by the anticipation of the demise of white European supremacy.

This follows from a narrative employing racial sensibilities and ‘cartographic anxiety’ when discussing an anticipatory manifestation of (white) loss in a disorderly global future where the ‘migrant other’ circulates more and more.

“The world’s biggest emitters are spending on average 2.3 times more on border arms than on climate finance.”

Such geopolitical anxieties have for instance manifested in the world’s biggest emitters spending on average 2.3 times more on border arms than on climate finance. The idea of a ‘climate migrant’ is the invention of a category entrenched in tropes of a helpless victim ‘outside’ the territorially delimited national border, when in fact mass migration narratives and Malthusianism have been interrogated for flawed alarmist predictions. It creates governable populations among those vulnerable to climate change and configures them as a problem that should be ‘solved’ by some technocratic protocol.

Governments tend to suspend essential civil liberties and human rights in times of ‘security crises’, including mass migration narratives. In these cases, border regimes create physical spaces such as refugee camps where the migrant is not simply outside the law pertaining to ‘citizens’, but become wholly abandoned by it.

The distinction between who is integrated into security regimes as a governable ‘migrant other’ operates largely along racialised exclusions but also on highly gendered forms of exclusion. UN Women estimates that children and women are 14 percent more likely to die in climate disasters and that women are 80 percent more likely to be displaced by climate change. Detention centres, emergency shelters, tents, and other migrant and refugee camps, as well as the borders in

which they operate are places of heightened risk of sexual violence, danger of human trafficking as well as child, early and forced marriage.

As more and more women are integrated into border regimes as governable populations, their lives become precarious, and their legal personhood is reduced to a bare life exposed to transnational border violence. UK development aid for instance cited the need to fight climate change as reason to support population control measures that led to forced sterilisation programmes of illiterate rural poor migrants in India between 2012 and 2014, and the deaths of at least 14 women by characterising these as 'security threats' to urban centres. This extends and intensifies the work of women residing outside the 'core' of Europe and denies them control over their bodies.

“Any climate debate requires as a starting point an ethics of recognition.”

The anti-immigrant sentiment taking hold in Sweden, echoing similar developments across Europe, promises a bleak future for the problem-framing and handling of the climate crisis. Any climate debate requires as a starting point an ethics of recognition, recognising the human worth of those who are most burdened by the climate crisis.



Silhouettes of refugees, Idomeni, Greece
© Giannis Papanikos/Shutterstock

GOLDEN RICE: CAN GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS PROVIDE FOOD SECURITY?

Food security is a problem humankind has been battling with from the beginning of its existence. As the distribution of food is not equal worldwide, it seems that global food security remains unreachable, despite numerous efforts to solve this problem. The pandemic led to even more widening inequalities - people were urged to stay home and many lost their jobs. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2022) reports that in the past year, globally and regionally, severe insecurity increased, and it is estimated that around 828 million people in the world faced hunger.

The biggest burden of malnutrition and hunger is carried by Africa, followed by Latin America and Asia – while Europe and Northern America are the least affected. Moreover, in every region food insecurity is more common among women than men – in 2021, 31.9% of women in the world were moderately or severely food insecure compared to 27.6% of men.

Both sustainability and food security could improve with the use of genetically modified organisms in food production. A genetically modified organism (GMO) is classified as an organism - except for a human - or a microorganism that has been altered using modern genetic engineering techniques.

The phrase “genetic modification” scares many people, but little do we know; humankind has been “genetically modifying” crops ever since it started growing them. Many vegetables and fruits we eat today were developed by careful breeding selection and mutagenesis. Because these do not classify as genetic engineering methods, the product is not a GMO.

Modern genetic engineering methods have simply enabled us to introduce a new trait to a plant without time-consuming breeding. In the past 50 years science has advanced even further to the point where we can generate plant or animal GMOs for food.

Rice fields in Vietnam © Giau Tran/Unsplash



Genetic technology has become a very popular tool in science and the knowledge about genetics and how to manipulate it expanded significantly in the past few decades. CRISPR Cas9, developed in 2012, made genetic modification even more accurate. In short, CRISPR Cas9 serves as an immune system of bacteria in nature. It involves the enzyme Cas9 which cuts DNA at specific regions, allowing us to perform cuts in DNA precisely where we want it.

Because of its simplicity and low price, the CRISPR technique was quickly adopted by most labs that work with GMOs – whether it is in plants, bacteria, or animals. The scientific community generally perceives GMOs as safe because modern techniques like CRISPR enable us to precisely determine which gene we want to change, delete, or add in an organism.

With the rapid progress in the field of genetic modification in the past decades, there have been countless new methods on how to improve crops, but generally they can be divided into two generations. First generation GMOs have traits that directly affect the farmer, such as resistance to drought, parasites, or herbicides. On the other hand, traits that directly affect the consumer, namely better nutritional value of the product (Golden Rice, Innate® Potato), qualify as second-generation GMOs.

A large part of food security is getting enough nutrients with food which is more difficult to accomplish in certain areas where food is scarce or there is not enough variety. To illustrate, one of the most common nutrient shortages in developing countries is Vitamin A deficiency – a lack of which can lead to temporary or permanent blindness, and even death. It is a public health problem in more than half of all countries of the world, especially those in Africa and South-

East Asia. Its worst effects are seen in children and pregnant women. To tackle this problem, Golden Rice was developed in the 1990s by the German plant scientists Ingo Potrykus and Peter Beyer. This genetically modified rice contains beta-carotene which is a precursor of vitamin A. Named after its distinct yellow colour, Golden Rice was proven as an effective source of vitamin A in humans.

***"Humankind has been
"genetically modifying"
crops ever since it started
growing them."***

30 years after its development, Golden Rice is finally seeing the fields for massive production, as the Philippines are the first Asian country to allow commercial production of this crop. According to a study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, substituting Golden Rice for conventional rice could provide almost 100% of the recommended vitamin A requirement for preschool children in Bangladesh and the Philippines, respectively.

Its approval in many other countries has been delayed because of the fear of the unknown - many believe GMOs are dangerous because supposedly we do not know enough about them - yet countless studies prove otherwise every year.

In addition to providing more nutrient-rich food, GMOs could enable us to do more sustainable farming. Plant analyses of crops and other industrial plants provide us with more and more information about plant genes and their roles in plant development. If we know the role of a certain gene and which trait it affects, we can use gene technology to change this specific trait

"Genetic technology may provide us with solutions for problems regarding food security and sustainability."

in plants. Consequently, we can come up with crops which are resistant to pesticides and pests, as are already grown in certain parts of the world – especially North America.

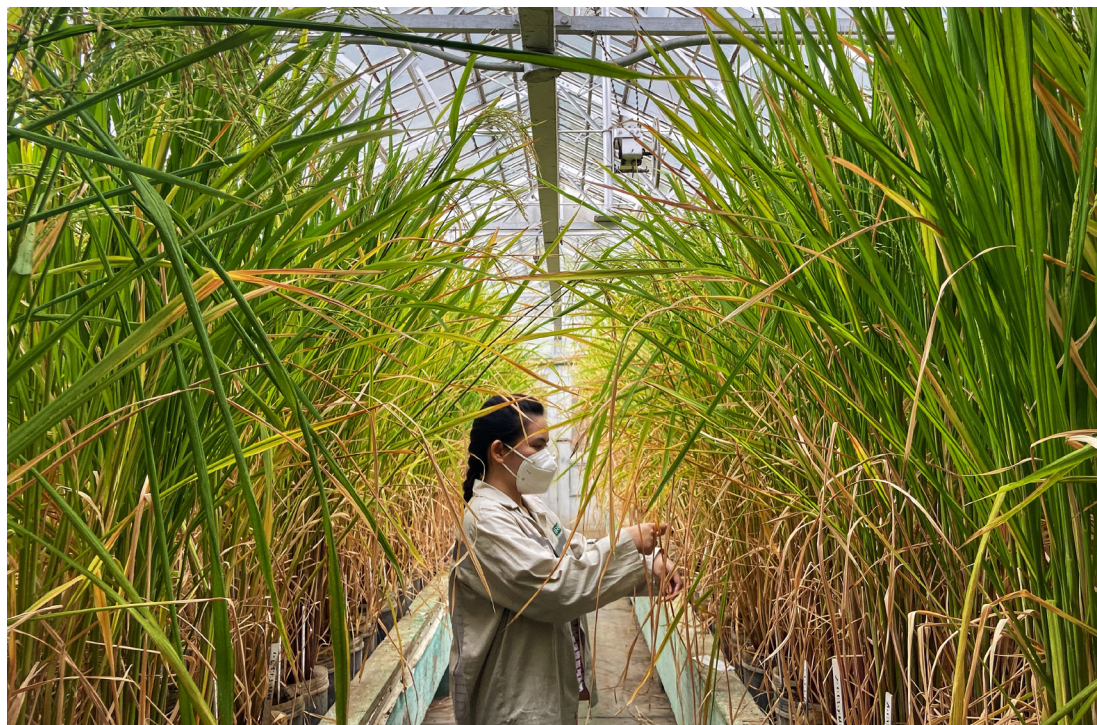
Further research is also being done on genes involved in accumulation of nutrients and genes, battling droughts, heat, and floods. Crops that require less fertilisers, pesticides, and water, could prove invaluable in today's changing climate, when all resources matter. Furthermore, these traits would make the production of crops a lot easier and lower the prices, which would result in a cheaper product.

Genetic technology is a valuable scientific tool that is able to provide us with solutions for problems regarding food security and sustainability. There are endless possibilities to the traits we can manipulate in crops, which could provide us with some solutions in regard to food (in)security which mostly affects parts of Africa and Asia. GMOs could therefore prove especially invaluable today, as the global climate is changing drastically.

Given our need for climate adaptable solutions to food (in)security, it is important to rethink fears and worries around the phrase "genetically modified organism" and look for the opportunities they might propose.

The CRISPR Cas9 technology was developed by two female scientists, Jennifer [DA1] Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier in 2012, for which work they received a Nobel prize in Chemistry in 2020.

"Leaf sample collection of *O. glaberrima* populations (April 2021)" © Everlyn Amparado, International Rice Research Institute under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0/Flickr.





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JAVIER ADRIÁN FERNÁNDEZ | ANALYSIS

SWEDISH FEMINST FOREIGN POLICY: RISE AND FALL OF A NOVEL IDEA



© Miguel Bruna/Unsplash

October 10, 1991, New York. Swedish Foreign Minister Margaretha af Ugglas is speaking at the stand of the UN General Assembly. Her message might nowadays seem as common sense in international relations, but Ugglas was advocating the first outline of how conflict prevention works today: deal not only with the symptoms of conflict, but also with its roots.

As this example shows, the foreign policy of Sweden has consisted, for many decades, of not only achieving Swedish interests, but also promoting its way of thinking to other countries. In other words, it has attempted to change the rules of the international system according to what Sweden considers the ideal rules.

This entrepreneurship of norms has ranged from promoting the increase of environmental protections to putting a greater emphasis on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Sweden already played a big role in the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, back in the year 2000. With the rising importance of feminism movements all around the world, Sweden also adopted feminist thought into its external action and started to encourage it in multilateral institutions. Recent decisions of the new Swedish government might put this trailblazing path in jeopardy.

One of the landmarks of the integration of feminist ideas into foreign policy was the adoption of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy in 2014. The first of its kind, Swedish feminist foreign policy applied a systematic gender equality perspective throughout all aspects of its foreign policy. The basis behind this new notion was that gender equality was considered to be not only a goal that was worth achieving for its own

sake, but also a necessary condition to achieve other objectives of the Swedish foreign policy. For example, a sustainable peace would not be possible in a country with persistent inequalities. From this foundation, and based on the reality of women all around the world, Sweden would strive to strengthen women's and girl's human rights, promote both their participation and influence in decision-making processes, and ensure that resources are allocated adequately in order to promote gender equality.

Shifting our focus away from Sweden, the creation of feminist foreign policies in other countries speaks for the Swedish success in promoting feminism and feminist policies. Mexico launched its own feminist foreign policy in 2020, followed by Spain in 2021. Other nations, such as France or Luxembourg, have too announced their commitment to integrate feminism into their own foreign policy, as well as some political parties that are currently not in government, such as UK's Labour Party.

The European Union itself has also been under increased pressure to integrate feminism into its Common Foreign and Security Policy. The European Parliament, at the initiative of the Greens/European Free Alliance parliamentary group, approved a resolution in October 2020, "calling on the EU to recognise the pivotal role women play in foreign policy and international security and to adapt its policy accordingly". Therefore, and although some countries are already ahead within the EU, a Europe-wide feminist foreign policy seems to have the support of a sizeable majority in Brussels.

Still, and despite the spread of a feminist approach to foreign policy, Swedish feminist foreign policy has not gone uncriticized. Concerns have been raised by the Centre

of Feminist Foreign Policy, an organisation for research, advocacy, and consulting on feminist foreign policy. They criticise the lack of inclusiveness of LGBTQ+ people, the rigidity of how gender is conceptualised, or the fact that Sweden continues to profit from arms exports while preaching the need for sustainable peace.

On a different line of critique, the concept of a feminist foreign policy itself is also not without its opponents. Although a minority voted against the European Parliament resolution, a majority of those negative votes came from the parliamentary groups that encompass the European right. That is, the far-right Identity and Democracy group, and the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists group, which include the Swedish Democrats.

“The concept of feminism is perceived as controversial by the political officials of some EU countries.”

These voting results highlight the resistance that Lund University professors Malena Rosén Sundström and Ole Elgström encountered when researching the opinion of other EU member-states towards Sweden’s feminist foreign policy. They found that, while there is a general support of the idea by most politicians, the concept of feminism is perceived as controversial by the political officials of some EU countries, mainly those in Eastern-Central and Southern Europe. For them, a policy being feminist is synonym of it being radical and extreme, and so a feminist foreign policy is not something they will adopt themselves. Thus, the dissemination of feminist foreign policies will likely be limited until that resistance can be overcome.

The opposition of the Swedish Democrats to the European Parliament’s resolution turned out to be a preamble of what was to come at the national level. Following the 2022 Swedish general elections, and the consequent formation of a centre-right wing government with outside support of the Swedish Democrats, new Foreign Minister Tobias Billström announced that the Swedish government will no longer be pursuing a feminist foreign policy. Although it is too early to predict the consequences of this development at the time of writing, Billström has highlighted new priorities of the new administration. Among them, we can find a higher emphasis on energy politics, increased European and Nordic-Baltic cooperation, and preventing refugees from reaching Sweden.

In spite of the criticisms made, the abandonment of a feminist foreign policy can have consequences for the work of Swedish external action. For instance, foreign assistance programs are less likely to be fully effective in reaching their goals if less attention is paid to gender dynamics of aid recipients. That being said, the fact that the pioneering country of feminist foreign policy is also the first country to scrap such policy challenges the prioritisation of feminism in foreign policy internationally, and may further signal a retreating Sweden in the global context.

Once considered a norm entrepreneur, the newly elected Swedish government might decide to start looking inwards and shift from a value-driven foreign policy to a foreign policy dictated by short-term interests. Only time will tell if the repealing of its feminist foreign policy is just a fleeting setback, or the first step towards a more closed Sweden.



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FRANCIA MÁRQUEZ: A FRESH START FOR COLOMBIA?

"After 214 years we've achieved a people's government, a government of the rough handed people, the standing people, a government of the nobodies of Colombia."

Drums roar as Francia Márquez, vice president-elect of Colombia, thanks the voters - and especially the women, her "sisters" - for awarding her and President Gustavo Petro the victory in the election of 2022. The success in May earlier this year was unquestionably historical. Not only did the Latin American country get its first-ever left-wing government, Márquez is also the second-ever woman and the first-ever black person to hold such an important office in Colombia.

What has her role been in shaping the image of Gustavo Petro - a former guerrilla leader - into one of inclusivity, peace, and modernity? I spoke to some of the young Colombians that brought Márquez to power, and one who hoped for a different outcome. But first - who is Francia Márquez?

Francia Márquez Mina (age: 41)

From: Yolombó, Cauca, Colombia

Family: Single mother of two

Education: Farming technician, National Training Service and Lawyer, University of Santiago de Cali

First jobs: Gold miner, domestic worker

Accolades: National Prize for Defence of Human Rights (2015), Goldman Environmental Prize (2018)

Márquez was born into a workers' family in 1981. Activism has played a significant role in her life straight from the start. At just 13 years of age, she protested against a dam construction that posed a threat to her village. Snneider Amaya, a young Colombian who grew up in Bogotá and voted for Petro and Márquez, says her background has been important for her public persona.

"The fact that a woman like her, from a remote village, has achieved such an important office is something symbolic and meaningful in Colombia. It is important and creates confidence that there's space for all sorts of people in government," he says.



Inauguration of Colombian president Gustavo Petro in 2022.

© Photo by USAID/Wikimedia Commons

Márquez has been described as providing a fresh wind to the Petro campaign, not only for being a woman, but also because she is African Colombian. The voters I spoke to seem to agree that Márquez did gain Petro a lot of votes, especially in marginalised communities.

For instance, in 2014 she led a women's protest march to the country's capital. The goal being to raise awareness about the problem of illegal mining in her region. Her work was successful – the issue was solved in just two years – and has served as inspiration for other people whose communities face similar problems. Her activism even earned her the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2018.

One of the young voters I talked to, Andrés Castellanos, who voted for Rodolfo Hernández, Gustavo Petro's final opponent, isn't convinced that Márquez' role as a representative of the "nobodies of Colombia" is as genuine as it has been portrayed.

"In practice, it has once again become evident that she has simply been a figure for mobilising the masses but that, in reality, she hasn't had the importance that the people expected her to," he suggests.

Andrés' view is strengthened by the fact that in the press release announcing the creation of a Ministry of Equality – a change strongly associated with Vice president Márquez, she is, somewhat ironically, not mentioned at all.

Ana Cuesta, whose vote went to Petro, has a brighter outlook on Márquez' first term as vice president. She describes Márquez as an inspiration for Colombian women and points out that she's a so-far scandal free politician who helped Petro on the road to victory by for



Man walking through Bogotá wearing a shirt in favor of Petro and Francia © Yhaira Rincon/Shutterstock

example proposing the creation of the Ministry of Equality.

"[She is] a great woman and human being who, thanks to her work and intelligence has gained the visibility she deserves in the country," she says.

Despite the consensus that Márquez has indeed contributed to the success of Gustavo Petro, her candidacy for vice president only affected the vote of one of the voters that I was in touch with.

"She had a significant impact because she was a proof of the ideals of Gustavo's government, focusing on the harmed, forgotten, and trampled on communities. The union of the Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, young people, and people of little resources is what supported Petro. Francia is the best leader and representative of several of these groups," says Sneider Amaya.

Ana Cuesta, on the other hand, was already sure about whom to vote for before Márquez was announced as Petro's running mate.



Francia Márquez Mina in November 2021
© Arturo Larrahondo/Shutterstock

"Márquez has given a voice to marginalised communities within the large and diverse country that is Colombia."

They will be four years of many changes and four years will surely not be enough. However, these changes are necessary, and one government must lay the groundwork for future governments to hopefully build upon."

"Francia Márquez being Gustavo Petro's vice president only confirmed my decision to vote for him. Nevertheless, I would've voted for Petro regardless of his vice president," she explains.

Despite differing views on Francia Márquez' contribution to the elections, none of the young Colombians I spoke to seem to think that she will play a significant role during the four years remaining until the next presidential elections. It also seems none of them are very optimistic about the near future in general.

"These will be years of transition. They will be very tough because adapting to change always brings about long processes," says Sneider Amaya about the upcoming presidential term.

Ana Cuesta fills in:

"The first years will be chaotic since the Petro government will have to fix all the damage caused by past governments.

Andrés Castellanos, who didn't vote for Petro and Márquez, is more careful in his verdicts about the future.

"I feel that it is too early to talk about the next elections because the president has only been in office for a few months. One must keep analysing the president's decisions and actions step by step in order to, in a few years' time, start thinking about the course to choose for the country."

All in all, after talking to these three young Colombian voters, I get the impression that the symbolic value of Francia Márquez candidacy, through which she has given a voice to marginalised communities within the large and diverse country that is Colombia, is perhaps greater than the expectations of her vice presidency. Her past as an activist gained trustworthiness and votes for Petro's campaign, but will Francia Márquez still symbolise something new and have a similar mobilisation effect on the presidential elections in 2026?

LUND 7-9 December 2022

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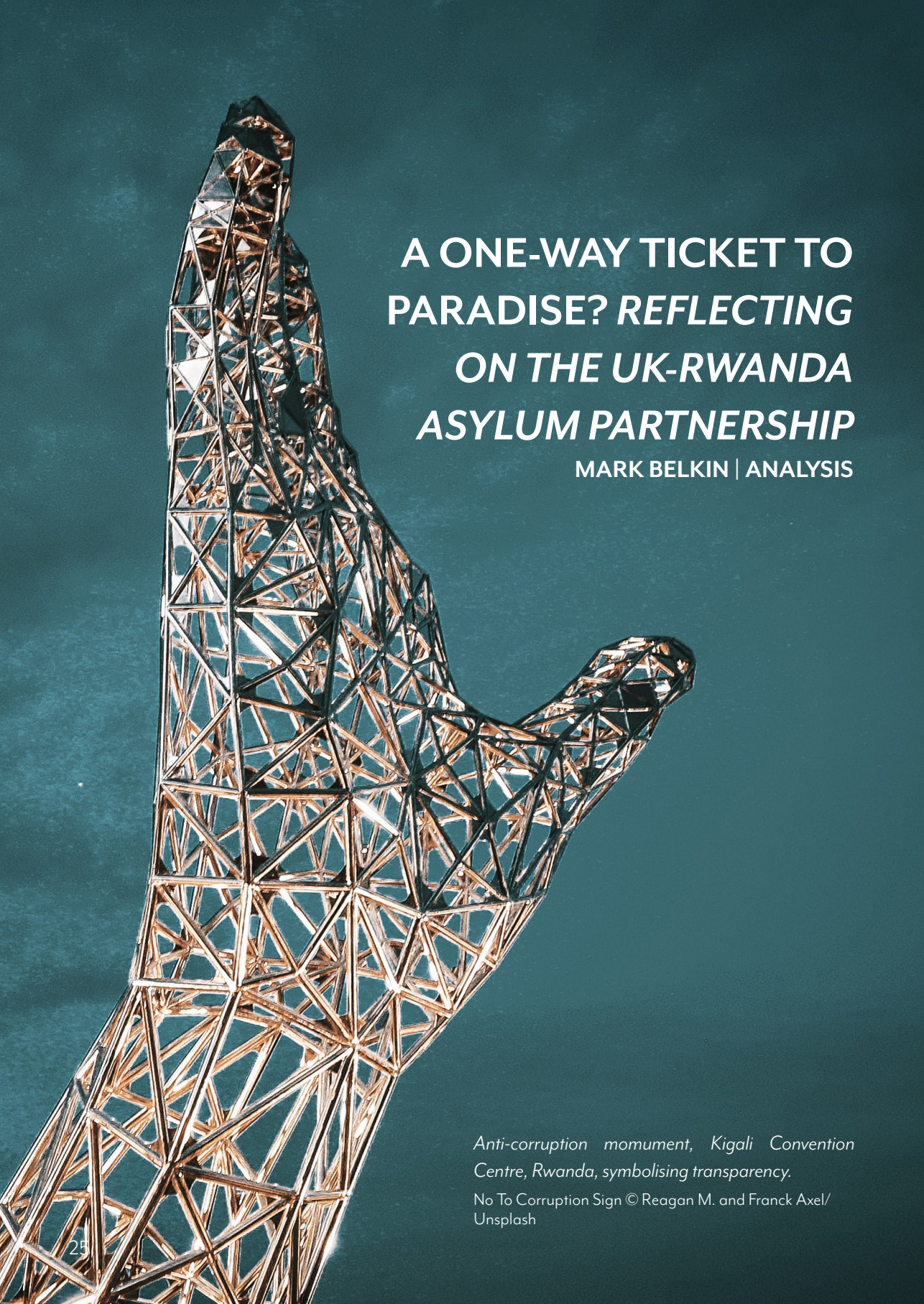


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A ONE-WAY TICKET TO PARADISE? *REFLECTING* *ON THE UK-RWANDA* *ASYLUM PARTNERSHIP*

MARK BELKIN | ANALYSIS

*Anti-corruption monument, Kigali Convention
Centre, Rwanda, symbolising transparency.*

No To Corruption Sign © Reagan M. and Franck Axel/
Unsplash

“Refugees welcome!” It’s 2015 and crowds fill train stations across Germany, holding up banners.

Following Angela Merkel’s adoption of an open-door refugee policy in 2015, public support for refugees has reached significant heights. Seven years later, *The Times*, *They Are A-Changin’*. In recent years, Germany and most other European states have toughened up their asylum policies and reinforced border patrols.

Former British prime minister Boris Johnson in particular antagonised refugees and repeatedly threatened to deport those reaching the UK from Europe. The UK government further manifested the hostile tendencies towards refugees into policy by installing an asylum partnership with Rwanda, hoping to decrease the number of refugee arrivals on British shores.

In the scope of the partnership, refugees will be sent more than 6000 km away from the UK to Rwanda under the “Asylum Partnership Agreement” between the two countries. The deal seems like a straightforward win-win situation for both governments: Rwanda hosts migrants that the UK deems illegal, and in return, the UK government pays a contribution to Rwanda for each migrant. If only illegal migrants get deterred, who are not considered “real refugees”, then what is the issue?

While Johnson proclaims that those who arrive at British coastlines have no asylum prospects and only come to the UK as “economic refugees”, the situation on the ground is more complex. Although some indeed flee from poverty and hope for improved livelihoods, most escape violence and persecution in their home country but lack the opportunity to legally claim asylum, according to Human Rights Watch. Those fleeing ongoing conflict or facing persecution

confront multiple barriers when seeking asylum in a process that is lengthy, bureaucratic and often dysfunctional.

As a result, the only option left for many refugees is to follow a dangerous route using the help of smugglers. Then, after having escaped violence and oppression, and crossed the British Channel in an unsafe rubber dinghy, refugees will be sent to Rwanda on a one way ticket. How welcomed might the refugees feel there? What are their chances to build a peaceful livelihood, in what Johnson described as “*one of the safest countries in the world*”?

Rwanda is a small, landlocked country in East Africa covered in never-ending green hills, giving it the nickname “country of a thousand hills”. It is widely known for being one of the last places on the planet where wild mountain gorillas can be spotted. The scenic tourist destination bears a dark past that left ripples affecting the country until this day. In 1994, the genocide against the ethnic Tutsi minority claimed about one million lives and drew the country into political and economic ruin.

Ever since, Rwanda undertook a drastic period of recovery. The economy is growing, the country is clean and corruption levels are low. With 88% of Rwandans feeling safe at night, it ranks as one of the safest countries worldwide according to the global analytic firm Gallup. While most facts and figures portray Rwanda growing into a paradise, a more nuanced picture is needed to fully depict life in Rwanda as a refugee.

“Refugees will be sent more than 6000 km away.”

On the positive side, Rwanda is experienced in hosting refugees. A fact often left out in Western media discourses on migration is that a large share of migration takes place on a regional level, with 63% of migrants in sub-Saharan Africa remaining in the region, according to the UN. Rwanda itself is currently hosting around 150,000 refugees, most of them stemming from the neighbouring DR Congo and Burundi. Per capita, Rwanda hosts around five times as many refugees compared to the UK. It does so successfully, according to recent reports from the UN refugee agency: young refugees are integrated into school systems, and most have access to a basic level of healthcare and modest social services.

Particularly for women, however, the situation in Rwanda is mixed. The country ranks 6th on the Global Gender Gap Index, just below Sweden, and offers progressive gender focussed policy. Nonetheless, a UN report shows that women still face a lack of physical safety, increased levels of gender-based violence, and poor health conditions in Rwandan refugee camps. Both male and female refugees equally struggle to make a living in Rwanda. Around 45% of refugees are not earning any income. Rwanda generally features high unemployment levels, which is not beneficial for outsiders who are neither familiar with the job market, nor with the local language Kinyarwanda.

As mentioned, Rwanda is considered safe according to global rankings – the question is for whom. Safety, or rather security, has been successfully established via a high military presence throughout the country. Both the current military and the ruling political party emerged from the resistance movement RPF, headed by long-standing president Paul Kagame. Attaining 99% of the votes during the previous election

"Per capita, Rwanda hosts around five times as many refugees compared to the UK."

in 2018, the authoritarian Rwandan regime is keen on projecting social cohesion, united under strongman Kagame. He and his government are extremely focused on preserving Rwanda's positive image abroad. In 2018, the former German ambassador to Rwanda characterised Kagame as a dictator in a private email, which resulted in heavy turmoil. After interception by Rwanda's intelligence, the ambassador was expelled shortly after. Authoritarianism paired with an effective military-security apparatus opens the door for mass surveillance and illegal incarcerations.

Refugees Welcome! © Markus Spiske/Unsplash



Criticising authorities in Rwanda rarely results in peaceful reactions. Whoever opposes the narrative of a happy and united people is punished, as exemplified by multiple mysterious killings and disappearances of oppositional political figures. Vague legislation implemented after the Genocide to prevent the further spread of ethnic tension ended up being abused to silence unwanted voices, including those of journalists.

In 2018, the Rwandan police shot 12 protesting refugees from DR Congo without any legal consequences. According to an assessment of the Swedish Supreme Court, the Rwandan judiciary suffers from “grave deficiencies” and therefore fails to guarantee fair trials for political detainees.

"Whoever opposes the narrative of a happy and united people is punished."

Such a tense political landscape with very restricted freedom of speech and a high military presence is not ideal for refugees fleeing from repression in other countries. Many refugees arriving in the UK have endured an array of violent and traumatising experiences and may be exposed to further violence in Rwanda.

While internally stable, Rwanda's relationship with its neighbours, and the DR Congo in particular, is one characterised by distrust and periodic violent clashes. According to a 2015 report by the NGO Refugee International, refugees from Burundi were coerced by Rwandan

officials to fight for pro-Rwandan armed groups in DR Congo. Rwanda's current regional relations therefore raise questions about safety and well-being of refugees in the country.

What is left of Johnson's promises of a safe haven for refugees and a supposedly win-win deal for Rwanda, the UK, and the refugees? Rwanda presents a growing economy with positive outlooks for the future, is politically stable and safe – but at what cost? The overwhelmingly positive image of Rwanda is preserved by the intimidation of political rivals, use of military force and an effective intelligence apparatus. Rwanda may be growing at a high pace, but is still an agrarian-dominated economy struggling with extreme poverty and high unemployment levels. Neither safety nor positive economic prospects are guaranteed for refugees in Rwanda.

In the bigger picture of international relations, refugees are increasingly turned into political pawns. Governments of wealthier countries are shifting the responsibility away from themselves by sending the refugees away and providing money to the hosting governments. As a result, the hosting governments gain significant political leverage. EU governments currently denouncing Human Rights abuses in host countries like Rwanda might reduce their critique if Rwanda threatened to opt-out of the migration agreement.

A rising number of global refugees combined with toughening national regulation on migration and asylum could lead to more transatlantic migration agreements. For refugees fleeing violence and oppression, this trend only creates more uncertainty and signals that they are not welcome to stay. The question of responsibility, should hosting countries fail their obligations towards refugees, remains unanswered.

MARCO RIZZI | ANALYSIS

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN A COUNTRY FOR (YE)MEN



Girl on Socotra Island, Yemen
© Andrew Svk/Unsplash

As of 2022, millions of Yemenis continue to face the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with acute levels of food insecurity affecting more than half the population. With the society in Yemen being highly patriarchal, women have historically been placed in a disadvantaged position due to their gender. As a consequence of the recent tragic events of violence against women occurring in Iran, the international community has diverted its eyes from the crisis in Yemen.

However, as the Biden administration declared during its first weeks of work, the conflict in Yemen is a key theatre of Western policy in the Middle East. Such consideration is also observable by an increase in American activity on the Yemen front, as the conflict is generally perceived to be of special political importance both at the international and at the European level. This is because all sides of the Yemeni civil war are reported to have violated human rights and international humanitarian law during the conflict that saw the Houthi and the Saudi coalition claiming to be the official government of the country.

In fact, after almost seven years of military offensives by the Saudi-led coalition, a truce in Yemen had been negotiated by the Houthi movement, an armed group of the Shia faith, and forces close to the Yemeni government led by Prime Minister Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed on the 2nd of April 2022. However, the following night turned into a nightmare for the Yemeni population.

Those who had been under the illusion that the truce between the warring forces could be extended woke up to the sound of the bombs. Raids resumed all over the country, from Taiz and Marib to the governorate of al-Dhale. The provisional ceasefire which was violated

that night had been based on three pillars: the reopening of Sanaa airport to commercial flights, the docking of supply ships in Hodeidah, on the Red Sea, and the reopening of roads in Taiz and other provinces. It was the latter that caused the negotiations to fail, as the Houthi movement refused to reopen the thoroughfares under its control.

“The conflict in Yemen is a key theatre of Western policy in the Middle East.”

Given the country's geographical proximity to the Gulf economies, whose economic and security relations with EU member states are of crucial importance, the conflict in Yemen has posed a direct threat to the European neighbourhood as a whole. Complementing the UN-sponsored efforts led by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths between 2018 and 2021, the EU therefore placed itself at the centre of the peace process.

Before the agreed truce, indeed, the EU Foreign Affairs Council, following the Stockholm Peace Agreement reached in December 2018, reiterated its and member states' support of an “inclusive political solution” calling for the “meaningful participation of all parties involved, including civil society, women and youth”. Unfortunately, the EU failed to act as such groups were generally excluded from negotiations despite their rather prominent role in peace initiatives on the ground.

Despite its apparent commitment, the EU remained a minor player in facilitating the participation of all actors of the society during peace negotiations. The importance of inclusiveness in negotiations is of particular relevance in the scenario of Yemen: in fact,

until the change of government which occurred last April, the conflict was often reduced to the bipolar confrontation between President Hadi and the Houthis, but, in reality it saw a myriad of smaller, yet less powerful movements in different areas.

Moreover, one of the key actors involved in the conflict are non-state armed groups, which are generally seen as to be mainly made up of men or in which women occupy only a marginal role. Despite small attention paid to cases of unarmed movements organised or led by women, their role in facilitating important moments of progress, such as ceasefires and prisoner release processes, has been well documented. The few women included in multilateral negotiations have always been marginalised, and their participation has generally been reduced to pure tokenism.

“Little attention is paid to important unarmed movements organised or led by women and their role in facilitating ceasefires and prisoner release processes.”

Women in Yemen played an important role in the public sphere already during the 2011 uprisings and the ensuing three-year transition period. They initially took part in the uprisings and later attended several Yemeni National Dialogue Conferences. After the start of the conflict in 2014, women's and local organisations also played a proactive role during the war that even the UN missions could not match, providing social stability even during the country's most difficult times.

These women-led organisations managed, among other things, to negotiate for the release of war prisoners, for the opening of roads during the siege of the city of Taiz, and to reopen the international airport in Mukalla. Women also worked to distribute humanitarian aid in various areas of the country.

In contrast, despite the key role played by women, we still observe a lack of inclusion of women in negotiation, especially in security matters, which is a common theme throughout the Middle East. The ruling classes of the states in this region are dominated by men, with no women heading their governments. Even at the ministerial, parliamentary, and legal levels there are very few examples of women in power. And when looking at the few examples that do exist, ministerial positions held by women are mostly pertinent to education, health, and economic roles, but never security or defence.

Moreover, women in power are mostly upper-class women, members of royal families, or other elites. Yemen is the most striking example, ranking last in terms of women participating in political life. The result is a non-standardised participation of women in political negotiations, hampered by various socio-cultural barriers. If negotiation platforms are dominated by men, it follows that the social and cultural context conducive to women's participation is often rather latent.

The existence of these obstacles creates a tendency towards tokenism of female participation in political and security discussions in the Middle East. This makes the contribution that female experts can make to the political processes of peace and security marginal, to say the least.

Due to the strong cultural component that complicates the issue of discrimination against women in Yemen, it is absolutely crucial that the goal of gender equality is prioritised at the decision-making tables of international actors and organisations.

“Exclusion of women in negotiation and security matters, coupled with domination of men heading government is a common theme throughout the Middle East.”

Both the EU and the UN are able to contribute to changing these priorities. They can draw on the experience that member states and institutions have gained over the years to establish gender inclusion and help guarantee women’s participation in the new peace process, which would be crucial to define effective and equal social policies.

In this way, these organisations can help develop effective policies to protect women’s rights and eliminate gender-based violence and abuses against them. Inviting female activists and groups formed by citizens to the new decision-making tables would help establish effective social policies and guidelines to rebuild the Yemeni social fabric after all these years of conflict.

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, sits on a pile of rubble and debris. He is looking off to the side with a somber expression. The background shows a city with many damaged buildings and a street with some vehicles. In the distance, there are mountains under a hazy sky. The scene is one of devastation and poverty.

A child in a ruined home, Taiz city, Yemen © akramalrasny/Shutterstock

MADOKA MOROZUMI | ANALYSIS

THE FEMALE GAZE: FROM A NORTH KOREAN MISSILE LAUNCH TO THE SCARCITY OF FEMALE POLITICIANS IN JAPAN



© Lisa Fotios/Pexels

On October 4th, 2022, a ballistic missile launched by North Korea skimmed over Japan, landing 3200 kilometers east of Japan's exclusive economic zone. The number of missile tests has been ramping up, with 7 of them recorded since September 25th - perhaps a warning by North Korea about the unity the United States is demonstrating with South Korea. Tensions are at a peak since Kim Jong Un took power in 2011. Responding to this tension and raising caution in the area, a joint US-Japan-Korea military exercise took place in early October.

The missile tests raised controversy about Japan's future defense measures. The tests were nothing new, considering North Korea has been developing weapons for years. The threat skyrocketed in 2017 with 23 missile tests done by North Korea throughout the year. This was somewhat improved by the Trump-Kim summit in 2018, where former US president Donald Trump stated they created a "special bond" between the two countries. Based on the summit, North Korea pledged to freeze missile launches and, on their side, the US suspended military exercises with South Korea and other allies. However, this agreement eventually fell apart.

In addition to the measures taken by the US, from 2016 to 2017, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions against North Korea for launching missiles and conducting nuclear tests. Although the Security Council submitted a proposal to strengthen sanctions in May of this year, this proposal was rejected by the Chinese and Russian veto.

Similarly, even after the latest ballistic missile launch, both countries failed to agree to the issuing of a statement of condemnation to the Security Council. Therefore, the UN Security

Council powers seem to fall short and North Korean missile tests are not stopped as a result.

After the missile was launched, neither the UN Security Council nor the international community took any action, but the threat is still clearly felt in Japan. Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida described the launch as "violent behavior" and agreed with US President Joe Biden to strengthen Japan's defenses. Furthermore, both leaders confirmed to work closely with South Korea and the international community in order to stand united against North Korea.

"Women can be a key voice in such a complicated and tense issue as between North Korea and Japan."

At a plenary session of the House of Councillors on October 6, Prime Minister Kishida and executives of each party discussed the response to the incident of North Korea's missile. He stated that in order to protect the peaceful way of life of the Japanese people, Japan would collect, analyze, and monitor the information concerning North Korea's movement including its future perspective, working closely with other countries.

To realize this, it is necessary to accelerate realistic studies and drastically strengthen Japan's defense capabilities, he said. Moreover, Kishida has expressed a willingness to amend the constitution in order to clearly mention the Self-Defense Forces and how to deal with emergency situations like this incident.

While those measures might be sufficient to address the current situation, the structure of Japanese politics is in dire need of change. From not only the aforementioned plenary session but also recent news, it is visible that Japanese Diet (parliament) members are predominantly male.

In 2022, only 9.7% are women - quite a low level compared to the international average of 26.1%. To make matters worse, this percentage is down 0.2 points from last year, even though other countries have seen the number of female parliamentarians increase significantly over the last 30 years.

“The representation of women in the current Japanese parliament is decreasing from a marginal 9.7%, compared to the international average of 26.1%”

For example, in Sweden, 46.1% of positions are held by women, while Rwanda holds the record for the highest percentage of female legislators, with 61.3% being female. Studies show that at the current pace, it will take about 40 years to achieve an equal number of men and women in the Japanese Congress. There are several possible explanations why Japan is lagging behind in the field of gender equality, while showing progressive political development in other realms.

First, Japanese society is historically male-dominated and has long held the notion that housework is a woman's job and that women should support men. Although this idea has now

faded, it may still prevent women from searching out top positions. Also, women might struggle to combine politics and private life. For new political candidates, women or men, it is difficult to enter the field and it often takes a long time to get elected. The instability this career choice brings, can make it even harder for women to combine it with the societal expectations they face.

However, if a woman decides to pursue a political career, is she even able to become a politician? Despite the implementation of a law that aims to make the number of male and female candidates as “equal” as possible in the national elections, it remains much harder for female candidates to get elected. One solution would be the introduction of a “Quota system” following the model used in some European states. However, it is difficult to predict the potential impact within the Japanese system, as it has not always been proven to be successful.

It is important to increase the number of female candidates in order to not avoid and exclude women's voices. In addition, statements made by women in politics can spread knowledge and provide a new perspective to other women. Furthermore, by incorporating a variety of opinions, Japanese society may be able to broaden its perspectives and resolve issues faster, for instance, with regard to the issue of North Korea.

Although this event in which North Korea launched a missile did not highlight the scarcity of female politicians, the plenary session regarding this issue, highlighted that Japan is a country with a gender gap and that it is lagging behind other countries. Gender equality is always important, but especially when women can be the key voice in such a complicated and tense issue as between North Korea and Japan.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The world comes to us in images. From early-morning to late-night doomscrolling, latest news and photo-of-the-year, carefully thought-out infographics or shaky on-the-scene video, a large part of our understanding of the world is shaped through visuals. Although the currently covered crises sometimes seem to shift by the week, some leave long-lasting imprints on our minds and imaginations.

Pictures of people either stranded, or arriving in places unfamiliar to them are nothing new to most of us - we see them whenever migration, refugees and borders are discussed. Tents, a collection of bags, cups of tea to be handed out. It seems that of the ongoing war in Ukraine, it was these images that provided a barrier between the first aerial pictures, showing moving troops, and later pictured atrocities and violence.

A barrier to remind us that it is human beings that are most affected by this war and that in the end, what matters are the personal stories of those people. Nearly 8 million Ukrainians have left their country, while another 8 million are estimated to be internally displaced. Communicating what happens in areas we do not have access to, different imagery evokes different emotions and so different actions. How and when is it that the war in Ukraine hits closest to home?

Of those being forced to leave Ukraine, the reality of what it means for a country to be at war

is shown in the pattern of arriving refugees being mostly women. Mothers and daughters, forced to leave fathers, sons, brothers - men - behind. In conflicts and war the issue of gender has been and continues to be more prevalent than in many other areas of life. Although books have been and could be written about the experiences of occupation and warfare at the frontline, this should not take away from the specific gendered experience of international relations women may face.

For those staying behind, the combined cocktail of gendered and wartime violence also particularly puts women at risk. Not only have the reports of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse skyrocketed, the lack of basic medical facilities and supplies further prevents women from seeking gender specific reproductive and sexual health care. Existing inequalities are magnified and make women and girls suffer disproportionately.

Wartime violence has not been and is still not the only example of gendered problems in international relations. Instead, our analysis of the place and power of women within the 'international' should start from the very systems constructed by our worldview and the ways in which we define peace, security, and gender itself.

Most introductions to International Relations theories tend to refer to the fathers of the

“Wartime violence has not been and is still not the only example of gendered problems in international relations.”

discipline, from Weber to Marx and other scholars from times past and present. While these core foundations of IR, a discipline aiming to make sense of the world around us, certainly do add strength to international political analysis, current events should inspire us to be more critical still.

Returning to theory, feminism is one of the key critical schools within International Relations, aiming to highlight the unavoidable role of gender in politics. This perspective challenges the invisibility of women both as participants in and subjects of international politics, as also argued in this magazine’s article on Yemen. A feminist perspective to IR then promotes the looking for and generation of spaces where women are heard, seen, and accounted for.

Besides bringing the perception of women to the forefront in a male dominated field, gendered international relations also allows a fresh (and perhaps necessary) take on solutions that positively acknowledge different groups within society, including men. Mothers and daughters may hold the knowledge and skills necessary to address the issues we face today. Still, is it enough for us to focus on “seeing” and “hearing” women within the international space?

An institution where women are rarely seen and heard is the military. This scene of international relations in times of conflict is still a highly male-dominated space in most countries. Historically, war was the business of men – women were not

allowed on the battlefield. There are numerous stories to tell, across cultures and time, about women who fought in men’s clothes. These stories highlight one thing above all: for the longest time, the battlefield was an exclusive place for men. If women were able to join the military at all, it was mostly as nurses or in other roles to support the health care department of an army.

To this day still, the division is clear for many: war and violence are seen as male, peace, on the other hand, as female. While we have seen an opening of state military structures to women in many countries since the 1970s, their integration into military service at all levels has been slow. There are a number of reasons for this. While the military might be accessible to women in more and more countries in theory, the changes to actually incorporate them have not been made.

The structures to accommodate the needs of women, such as suitable health care and the option to combine a military career with family life, have not been created in most cases. In addition to that, mechanisms to assure the safety of women in this male-dominated field have to be introduced. A recent Pentagon survey shows that in 2021, the percentage of women in the US military who endured sexual assault spiked to the highest level since the Defence Department began tracking the data 16 years ago.

“Historically, war was the business of men.”

The strong dichotomy of viewing women and children as worth protecting while men have to go to war, made visible in military structures, is an understanding of gender roles that needs to be overcome. This is not to say that the

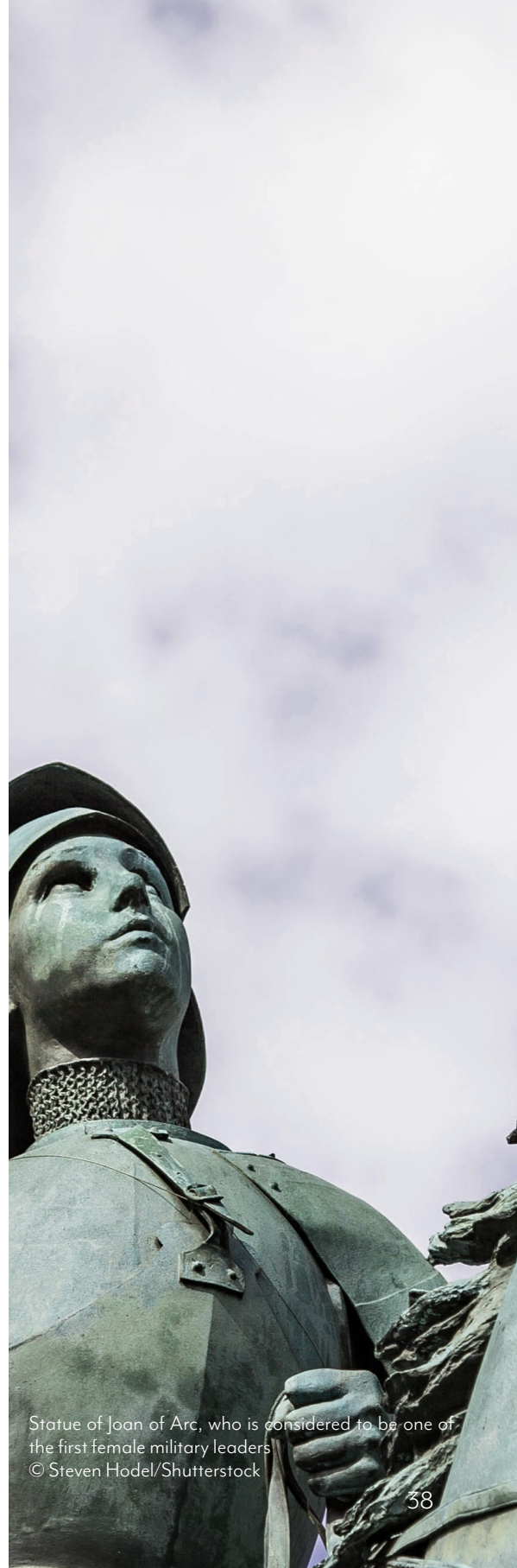
disproportionate disadvantages women and girls often face in times of war and conflict should be ignored. On the contrary, moving to a more gender-neutral idea of the military has the power to influence our overall perception of gender and therefore impact these issues to the positive.

We cannot simply fit women into a system that was not meant to accommodate them - although women can be soldiers in Ukraine, the general discourse of war is still male dominated. It is therefore not only necessary to give attention to gender within our discussion of politics, but also to restructure our dialogue to make place for it.

If we frame “women” in the context of “women, peace, and security” solely as a group requiring protection, we again exclude them from areas of action and decision-making. Wartime violence needs our attention, but so does the role of women in military force.

“A more gender-neutral idea of the military has the power to influence our overall perception of gender.”

Whether our mothers and daughters are facing war or turning to safety, we cannot deny the impact of gender on politics and vice versa. Whether the solution lies in a feminist foreign policy or a reconstruction of our entire international system - it’s time for a change. Not just in war, not just in crisis, but in all elements of life, the theoretical debate of gendered international relations should translate into practice, allowing both mothers and fathers to envision a better future for their daughters and sons.



Statue of Joan of Arc, who is considered to be one of the first female military leaders
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