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DEBAT

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“As we celebrate International Women’s Day, I think of the young women that I see today, and the opportunities that stand before them” p. 30

“Today, more than 60% of Rwanda’s lower house of parliament is made up of women” p. 9

“Indigenous women have taken center stage in Brazil when it comes to fighting this threat” pp. 18-19

“This shows that even the earliest First Ladies have more political influence than the history books show” pp. 14-15

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Hello everyone and happy spring! The third issue of DEBAT 2024-2025 is here and once again I am so proud of the team for their work in both writing and designing this issue. We truly enjoyed creating this issue and hope you find just as much pleasure in reading it.

This issue's theme is Women in Politics which coincides with the celebration of International Women's Day on March 8th. Whilst the fight for women's rights continues across the globe there are many female figures in politics that can serve as inspiration and show that there are no limits to what women can achieve. The articles in this edition delve into the history of feminism, political issues that women face, the role of women in politics and the stories of many inspirational figures such as Christine Lagarde and Michela Murgia.

We hope you find something here that sparks your interest and encourages you to reflect on the impact of women in society—whether seen or unseen, acknowledged or overlooked. Most of all, we hope you learn something you didn't know before!

Happy reading and until next time!

Jess, Co-Editor in Chief

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Hallo allemaal en een gelukkig voorjaar! De derde uitgave van DEBAT 2024-2025 is hier en ik ben weer zo trots op het team voor hun werk in zowel het schrijven als het ontwerpen van dit nummer. We hebben echt genoten van het maken van dit nummer en hopen dat jullie net zoveel plezier beleven aan het lezen ervan.

Het thema van dit nummer is Vrouwen in de politiek, wat samenvalt met de viering van Internationale Vrouwendag op 8 maart. Terwijl de strijd voor vrouwenrechten over de hele wereld voortduurt, zijn er veel vrouwelijke figuren in de politiek die als inspiratie kunnen dienen en laten zien dat er geen grenzen zijn aan wat vrouwen kunnen bereiken. De artikelen in deze editie gaan in op de geschiedenis van het feminisme, politieke kwesties waar vrouwen mee te maken hebben, de rol van vrouwen in de politiek en de verhalen van vele inspirerende figuren zoals Christine Lagarde en Michela Murgia.

We hopen dat je hier iets vindt dat je interesse wekt en je stimuleert om na te denken over de impact van vrouwen in de samenleving - of ze nu gezien of ongezien, erkend of over het hoofd gezien worden. En bovenal hopen we dat je iets leert wat je nog niet wist!

Veel leesplezier en tot de volgende keer!

Jess, Co-hoofdredacteur



Colofon | Colophon

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A Woman's Place is in the Oval Office

By Anna Idziak

To break the “highest, hardest glass ceiling” is no small feat. The former presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, referred here to the position of the President of the USA with much hope, “someday, someone will”. Currently there have been two attempts to break this ceiling, but to no avail. Both Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris ran against Donald Trump and lost. While Joe Biden, an old white man, won from Trump in 2020. Obviously this is a gross oversimplification of the election result, but it makes you wonder if misogyny played an instrumental role in the elections of 2016 and 2024. The electoral results make people agonize if America will ever be ready for a female president.

The office of the President of the USA has always been held by a man. Leadership qualities like rationality and decision-making abilities are deemed as paramount by 88% of American voters. These traits are often associated with the masculine stereotype. Even though (most of) the American people claim to not care about the gender of the candidate, their understanding of different qualities influences their voting behaviour. Pre-existing notions of a president, like the “ideal” of the Founding Fathers, combined with unconscious prejudices can move a voter away from a female candidate.

Still, the US does have some experience with women performing presidential tasks. Take First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who took over some of her husband's duties when he was suffering from polio. She frequented many areas and programs, and reported back to President Franklin D. Roosevelt about the situation in the country. This, of course, did not go without

controversy, but Eleanor Roosevelt is a testament to the knack women can have for the presidential office.

Even though sexism and biases in all likelihood contributed to the female candidates losing in the US presidential elections, this does not paint the full picture. Vice President Kamala Harris and Hillary Clinton were running for the incumbent party against a rather fervent and disreputable figure. The 2016 and 2024 elections can be categorised as “change elections”, where due to the socio-economic circumstances voters turn away from the incumbent party. So the female democratic candidates were already at a disadvantage thanks to timing. Additionally, both candidates have long-standing careers in politics, which makes them seem like political insiders. This stands in contrast to the perceived “man of the people” Donald Trump. Especially in an election where voters want radical change, an outsider to politics might be more enticing. This predicament prompts the “female presidentiality paradox”, where a woman has to compensate with “presidential” qualifications to be on equal footing with a male candidate. Yet, because she is so exceptionally qualified, it makes her less electable in a “change election”.

To conclude, (implicit) misogyny and timing have been influential factors in Kamala Harris' and Hillary Clinton's electoral losses. However we should not forget that Hillary Clinton won the popular vote in 2016. A woman got nearly 75 million votes in the presidential election in 2024. So the support is there, but it might take a while until a woman is put forward as a candidate again. Still, women are making great strides in American politics. Currently, 28% of Congress is female and the number is rising each election. We know that someday the USA will have a female president, however, the question if it is ready for one is hard to answer. Many commentators doubted that America was ready for a black president, yet Barack Obama won convincingly in two consecutive elections. Thus the USA might see the glass ceiling shatter earlier than it would expect.



Op weg naar gelijke stemmen

Door Inge van Hoek

Terwijl er in de jaren '10 van de 20e eeuw veel oorlog plaatsvond in de wereld, was er in Nederland sprake van een hele andere strijd: de strijd voor gelijkheid tussen man en vrouw. Een punt dat daarin centraal stond was het algemeen vrouwenkiesrecht, dat in 1919 pas werd ingevoerd. Diverse personen en organisaties hebben hierin een belangrijke rol gespeeld.

De grootste organisatie die zich inzette voor deze kwestie was de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht. Deze is in 1894 opgericht door een aantal vrouwen met verschillende culturele achtergronden, met één gezamenlijk doel. Annette Versluys Poelman was de eerste presidente van de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht. In eerste instantie was de vereniging vrij klein en hadden ze moeite met het werven van leden, echter ging dit geleidelijk steeds makkelijker, met name door de moeite die erin werd gestoken door de leden.

Een van deze leden is Aletta Jacobs. Zij wilde zich in 1883 al verkiesbaar stellen voor de verkiezingen bij de gemeente Amsterdam. Echter werd zij, ondanks dat ze volgens de grondwet aan alle criteria voldeed, meermaals afgewezen. In 1887 werd in een grondwetswijziging duidelijk gemaakt dat enkel mannen kiesrecht hadden. Ze sprak regelmatig namens de beweging over het belang van de vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in de politiek.

De vereniging groeide doordat deze lezingen door het hele land werden gegeven. Jacobs werd in 1902 presidente van de Amsterdamse afdeling van de

vereniging en later werd zij de algehele voorzitter. Dit bleef zij tot in 1919 het algemeen kiesrecht werd ingevoerd.

Een andere belangrijke en radicale activist was Wilhelmina Drucker,



ook wel bekend als IJzeren Mina. Zij richtte in 1889 het tijdschrift de Vrije Vrouwenvereniging op en was, net als Jacobs, betrokken bij de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht. In 1969 werd de vrouwenbeweging Dolle Mina naar haar vernoemd, vanwege haar grote inzet voor vrouwenrechten

In 1907 waren een aantal leden uit de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht gestapt die vervolgens de Nederlandse Bond voor Vrouwenkiesrecht oprichtten. Het doel was 'opvoeding tot het verkrijgen van het vrouwenkiesrecht' in plaats van het 'verkrijgen van vrouwenkiesrecht' waar de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht naar streefde. Zij vonden namelijk dat vrouwen nog niet zelfstandig konden oordelen en dus nog niet klaar waren om deel te nemen aan de politiek. In het bestuur van deze Bond zaten ook

mannen. Ze dachten op die manier een breder draagvlak te kunnen krijgen. De leden van de bond waren over het algemeen wat degelijker dan die van de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht.

In 1914 besloot de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht bijeen te komen om te vergaderen onder leiding van Jacobs over een petitie wat betreft de grondwettelijke gelijkstelling van man en vrouw. Voorafgaande vond een demonstratie plaats en de petitie werd een jaar later aan de regering aangeboden. Dit was echter niet de laatste demonstratie. Op 18 juni 1916 organiseerde de Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht een nieuwe, met als slogan: "Geen grondwetswijziging zonder vrouwenkiesrecht". Er deden zo'n 18.000 betogers mee en na deze demonstratie steeg het ledenaantal van de Vereeniging naar 22.000..

Een jaar later, in 1917, werd het passief stemrecht voor vrouwen ingevoerd. De eerste vrouw die in de Tweede Kamer terechtkwam was Suze Groenweg in 1918. Ook Jacobs had zich voor deze verkiezingen verkiesbaar gesteld. In 1919 werd, naar aanleiding van het wetsvoorstel van Hendrik Pieter Marchant, de wijziging van de Kieswet voor actief vrouwenkiesrecht aangenomen. Het woord "mannelijk" werd uit de wet geschrapt. Sindsdien hebben geslacht en politiek recht niks met elkaar te maken. De strijd op dat gebied is gestreden, nog genoeg strijd wat betreft seksuele ongelijkheid te gaan.

Politics of Inequality: The Outlook on Conditions Women Face on the Eastern European Political Scene

By Pola Michałek

To say that the environment is hostile for women political leaders is an understatement of the general conditions that female politicians face. Breaking the ceiling is only just the beginning of the struggle that women face as they enter politics. But the pains that they face differ. Regarding Eastern Europe, who is to blame for the harsh realities female political leaders experience?

The Environment Nurturing Inequality

Political scientists often differentiate the factors contributing to inequality between regions. The stage is set with entirely different historical, cultural, and sociological surroundings when it comes to comparison of the world regions. Eastern Europe, for example, is often regarded as more prone to create an environment of inequality for women as well as minorities such as queer people. What contributes to that? Is discrimination a common experience for the present female leaders of Eastern Europe? Most importantly - can it be changed for the better? If so, how?

In politics, it has been noticed that women cannot be perceived as either too masculine or feminine. The sociological name for this phenomenon is called double bind and has been identified as a key aspect of a double standard. An inside EU research shows both of the sexes agreeing that a man makes a better political leader than a woman. Also, women often face the fact that their position on the party lists will be lower than men's. Any feminist agenda is seen as a big electoral turn-off, so any collaboration between women is not an option. Furthermore, females experience a lack of financial resources, as well as time because of family commitments. Finally, women tend to be less inclined to join grassroot movements. All of the aforementioned conditions have been identified on the Eastern European political scene.

Historical Events in The Region

The general cause of inequality has been largely associated with the rise of anti-gender sentiments, which began in the 2000s and exploded in the 2010s. This rise, however, can be seen all around the world. A more commonly recognized factor is the strong lobbying influence of religious institutions, such as Christian and Orthodox churches in the region. This is due to the high levels of trust gained from the civilians after the collapse of the communist regime in the 1990s. In order to receive the support of the church, parties ceased to advocate for equality policies. The growing power of the church in post-communist regions can be linked to a desire to reject Soviet-era values. The Soviet Union has shown support towards abortion rights, welfare policies, and women's empowerment, which conflicted with the values of the church. The notion began the historic support of Eastern Europeans towards the church as a sign of opposing Soviet values. At the beginning of the 2010s, some of the countries of Eastern Europe had gained a European Union (EU) membership. The organization's moral ethos, which promotes equality among citizens of its member states, was intended to inspire and guide aspiring member countries. However, in Eastern Europe, it instead became fuel for the growing anti-gender agenda of certain political parties. EU's gender equality standards started to be seen as impositions coming from Brussels that threatened state sovereignty, national values as well as identity. The unequal integration of Eastern countries in comparison to the Western ones fueled the resentment even more.

Women Politicians of Eastern Europe

When looking at the actual female political leaders of Eastern Europe, what is mostly noticeable is

the limited agency these women have. This can be seen when examining the political careers of Ana Brnabić, the current president of the National Assembly in Serbia, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the official leader of the opposition movement party of Belarus. The latter politician has carefully crafted a narrative around herself, emphasizing the accidental nature of her candidacy in presidential elections, as well as leadership, which she assumed after her husband's imprisonment. Her minimalist political agenda focuses solely on winning the presidency to restore democracy and promptly hold legitimate elections. However, this agenda is also wrapped in highly gendered performance. This allows her to exploit societal stereotypes to her advantage.

Brnabić has been shown as lacking any agency in her own party, as well as in Serbian politics in general. The president of the national assembly is largely seen as Aleksandar Vučić's (current president of Serbia) puppet, used to appear more equal to the EU, as the country is known to be in the process of candidacy to become a member of the organization. Brnabić's policy proposals on key issues - such as the reduction of the bureaucracy in politics and legal-

izing same-sex marriage - are continuously rejected by both Vučić and the Parliament. This disregard for any propositions made by the prime minister to the policies only strengthens the argument of her staged presence in Serbian Politics. Although none of the aforementioned leaders are from countries belonging to the EU, the case of Serbia perfectly corresponds with the notion of how Eastern European countries perceive equality which is the heart of the organization. The staging of equal rights presence in Serbian politics fails to materialize as soon as one looks closer behind the scenes of the nomination, as well as the actual agency the Serbian politician has. However, there are cases of Eastern European politicians that show that winning the fight against inequality sentiments in politics is possible. In her 2024 Moldavian presidential reelection campaign, Maia Sandu had to face gendered misinformation campaigns started by the Russian lobby. The lobbyist hoped to gain, with this tactic, the trust of Moldovians with its pro-Russian presidential candidate. Still, even with the use of this destabilizing method, Sandu managed to win the 2nd round of elections with her pro-European program and attention to the needs

of Moldovans. Kaia Kallas comes to mind as another example of this. She became the first woman to be a prime minister in Estonia, whilst explicitly showing support for the feminist movement. Although her popularity as PM at some point was judged through the lens of her husband's business decisions, she persevered and became a candidate for one of the most important positions in the EU structures. Her values concerning equality are known and expected to influence her tenure as an EU foreign policy chief.

What Follows

Historical events show that regime changes and grassroots movements are the most crucial factors in advancing women's rights, which has also been proven in the politics of Eastern Europe. Still, women are less inclined to join them. Given the historical evidence, a type of shift in relations between women and politics must happen in one form or another to experience improvement. How will the Trump presidency contribute to that? Will the ongoing conflicts in, for example, Ukraine and Gaza provide an opportunity for that? The following years will show us whether the realization of any of that will take place.



MICHELA MURGIA:

A Story of Feminism, Intersectionality, and ‘Queering’ of the Family

By Carlotta Moscarella

In August of 2023, Italy lost one of the most influential intersectional feminist activists and writers of her time: Michela Murgia. Born in Sardinia in 1972, Michela went through a complex childhood because of her father, a violent man with a highly patriarchal view of the relations between males and females. Her Christian faith has always been foundational to her and even inspired many of her writings. She studied theology, although never managed to complete her studies. Michela was not born a writer: in fact, she started to write during her time working in a call center. As Michela herself said,

“until that time [she hadn’t] written anything, not even a secret diary”

However, as she was living the ‘normal’ life of a low-skilled worker in Italy, she deeply understood the injustices in the structure of our society and could not help, but narrate them: this was “the only weapon [she had]”. This is how her blog, which would then be her first published book, was born: it was called ‘The World Must Be Told’ (Il Mondo Deve Sapere). The precarious working situation from which Michela’s writing career originated meant that this choice was a political act, rather than an artistic one for her. Nevertheless, she would then have a successful career as a writer and would be awarded multiple prizes by the literary critic. Indeed, her 2009 novel ‘Accabadora’ won the Campiello Prize in 2010, the Molinello Award for First Fiction, and the Mondello International Literary Prize, while also being further translated into other languages including English.

Michela is politically active in unconventional ways. To her, every action is about politics. Writing, in the first place, was a way to give a voice to all the people who had been made silent and had to endure injustices and discrimination. However, Michela’s voice has also been thunderous and harsh in interviews and media as a columnist, commentator, and anchorwoman. She has harshly fought against sexism in every form, especially those that are entrenched and socialized even in the everyday life of modern society. Michela argued that the

patriarchy, albeit a “structural injustice which generated social differences based on biological differences” forces every citizen to take a position, as there is no one who is not affected by it.

Michela was not only the Italian pillar of feminism, rather she stood firmly against discrimination against minorities and vulnerable groups, in particular the LGBT+ community. She created for herself what she called her ‘Queer’ family, in an attempt to conceptually revolutionize the traditional and conservative understanding of family. According to Michela, this view of the family based on blood ties was nothing but another leftover of the patriarchy. In contrast, the concept of the ‘Queer’ family was a way for Michela to push the understanding of family beyond the binary and heterosexual consensus of it, and instead fund the family on the ‘ius voluntatis’, the ‘law of the will’. Theorized in her work, the tentative of ‘queering’ the family comes back again and again in her discourse and written production, but it was also practiced by herself personally. Her own Queer family was a compound of four ‘Soul’s children’ (‘Figli dell’anima’, a type of relationship common in Sardinia, her homeland) and several close friends. Family is about platonic love and care, not about blood. Unfortunately, because of legal compliances due to her illness and near death, she unwillingly married one of the members of her Queer family before passing away on the 10th of August. For the wedding, she chose the color white for every member of the family, one of her last gestures to overcome the straight normativism of family relationships.



Rwanda: The World Leader in Women's Political Representation

By Barbara Bolyós



In 1994, Rwanda experienced a genocide in which a significant portion of the population, primarily men, lost their lives. After the war, around 70% of the country's population consisted of women. Facing the challenge of rebuilding the nation, the Rwandan leadership recognized that sustainable development could not be achieved without the active participation of women. In 2003, Rwanda adopted a new constitution that mandated that at least 30% of positions at all levels of government must be held by women. This applied not only to parliament but also to local governments and administrative institutions. This measure aimed to ensure that women were not left behind in political decision-making. However, the introduction of this quota did not just provide opportunities for women, it also transformed political and social norms.

Following the introduction of the mandatory quota, the proportion of female representatives increased significantly and has remained consistently high ever since. Today, more than 60% of Rwanda's lower house of parliament is made up of women, the highest percentage in the world.



With greater female representation, more political initiatives have focused on education, healthcare, and strengthening women's rights. For example, programs supporting girls' education have been introduced, providing scholarships and mentorship opportunities. In healthcare, significant progress has been made through maternal and child health reforms, reducing infant mortality and improving care for pregnant women. To strengthen women's economic position, land ownership rights have been reinforced, ensuring equal access to land ownership and inheritance rights. A more inclusive and equitable social structure has also contributed to Rwanda's rapid economic growth. The country serves as an example for other developing nations, demonstrating that strengthening female representation can lead to positive social and economic changes. This example highlights that gender quotas can effectively increase women's political participation when supported by appropriate social and legal measures. Similar quotas exist in other countries, but they often do not achieve the same significant results as in Rwanda.

In France and Germany, party-list quota systems are in place, but they do not always guarantee that women enter parliament. Some parties circumvent these regulations by nominating female candidates in districts where they are less likely to win or by placing them at the lower ranks of electoral lists. In other cases, quotas

are bypassed through technical loopholes, such as making rules apply only to nominations rather than actual seat distribution. In contrast, Rwanda's quota is legally binding and extends beyond parliament to local governments and other administrative levels. Yet, voluntary quotas, such as those used by political parties in Scandinavian countries, often depend on the commitment of individual parties to gender equality. There is no central oversight in voluntary systems, meaning that women's representation varies between parties.

Rwanda's success in increasing women's political representation shows that legally mandated quotas can effectively promote gender equality in government. However, such quotas may not work as smoothly in every country, as their impact depends on political structures, enforcement, and social attitudes. In Rwanda, the combination of legal mandates and societal rebuilding efforts led to significant positive changes. While quotas alone are not a universal solution, Rwanda demonstrates how they can drive meaningful progress when supported by broader institutional and cultural shifts.

The Forgotten World Cup

The Struggle of Women's Football

By Mariana Goldsmit Valdespino

Gender inequality is one of the world's most crucial issues, penetrating all trades, from office settings to political spheres, and the world of sports. With over 3.5 billion fans, football is the world's largest sport. It's also a setting that women have been fighting for a place in for more than a century, with many of those efforts starting in the 1971 female World Cup. However, if you google "first female world cup" you will get no mention of the Copa 71. But why is that?

The 1971 World Cup - A Celebration of the Game

The 1971 World Cup started as a massive celebration of football and the place of women in it. After hosting the men's FIFA World Cup in 1970, Mexican businessmen saw further opportunities for their new infrastructure. So, they decided to host the same event but for women, welcoming six female national squads.

Though the political situation within the football federations was different, the social reception for the tournament was phenomenal. The players, many of whom had never been recognized, were immediately greeted by photographers, autograph seekers, and gift-givers. The entire country was consumed, with football-oriented family gatherings, the first televised female match, and a record-setting attendance of 110,000 for the final. Today, that remains the highest-attending female sports event ever. Furthermore, it was evident that all those fans were there because of their genuine love for football, all football. They were there to see good players play, not to sexualize and humiliate them or witness what was viewed as an "erotic and comedic... joke".

So Why Did An Event So Big and Successful Get Completely Erased From History?

The simple answer: because it made the men in charge of football uncomfortable.

Women's football challenged their ideas, power, and dominion over the sport. But this resistance was not new. In

the early 20th century, women's football was growing fast. In 1917, there were 30+ female clubs in England alone. However, this was short-lived. In the 1920s, medical journals across Europe published articles outlining the supposed harm that football would cause to women's wombs and ovaries. Soon afterward, the English Football Association imposed a 50-year ban on the sport. Others followed, and the game was even criminalized in Brazil and Italy. Thus, the people in power of football, all men, successfully pushed women out of yet another professional sphere.

While the federation handled the professional banning, society took care of girls simply playing for fun. At the time, it was expected for women to serve purely domestic roles. Playing football did not fit into that box. The 2024 documentary "Copa 71" includes interviews with the tournament's players that show how women were socially discouraged and marginalized from the sport. Mexican striker Silvia Zaragoza described how as a kid her father would beat her if he caught her playing football. Meanwhile, Carol Wilson (England) had to join the army to be allowed to play. Even after the ban ended, players were constantly asked questions such as "but what is a pretty girl like you doing playing football?" Few kept playing after that scrutiny, and the sport never grew.

However, as the second wave of feminism began, things started looking better. Female teams re-arose across Europe. And that is exactly when the Mexican businessmen came in, giving players across the six participating nations a place in the game. Now, while that gives an overview of some of the struggles female players faced, it still doesn't answer why everything was forgotten. For that, we need to look at what happened during the 1971 World Cup itself.

A Quest for Money, Not Equality

It is easy to paint the tournament as a revolutionary move inspired by a desire for more gender equality. While it certainly paved the way for some changes, the truth is that it was economically driven. The idea for it came after looking at how profitable the male World Cup was. However, FIFA opposed this tournament and strongly threatened the organizers, forcing them to only use privately owned stadiums, which happened to be the largest. Thus, the organizers were tasked with the complicated mission of selling every single seat. While they surely delivered, their means for it weren't exactly something the rising second-wave feminists would relish.

Instead, they went with the tactic of sexualizing the game. They launched massive publicity campaigns to promote a competition that combined “the passions of most men: football and women”. This included headlines like “soccer goes sexy south of the border”, and promises that the “uniforms would be as close as possible to hot pants”. While, ultimately, most attendants didn't go to sexualize the players, rather they went to enjoy the game, the fact that such campaigns exist shows yet another example of men placing women into the same misogynistic box.

The money issue is also what provided the greatest opportunity to really change things. After seeing



what male players earned, the finalist Mexican team asked to be paid two million pesos (around €257,000 today). This was still not what the men made. But, as player Elvira Aracén said, they deserved to be compensated for their work, work that was making the organizers very rich. Obviously, the organizers disagreed. There was no reason to divide earnings with the players. Instead, they painted the women as “greedy”. But at the end of the day, the teams just wanted to play, and the opportunity to do it on the greatest stage yet was just too good. So the final happened with none of the players getting paid. All the money still went to the men. However, after the tournament, all the players were completely abandoned by the press, public, and organizers. When they returned home, they did so to empty airports. That was when the clean-up period began and all the progress that could have been made was lost.

FIFA applied stronger pressures on the federations, in an immediate reac-

tion that historian David Goldblatt described as typical of “wounded men: negative, violent, and aggressive”. If women's football were to grow, FIFA would lose their monopoly and, as the Mexicans demonstrated, women might ask to get paid. To FIFA, the issue of women's football was one of both gender and control. So, they struck back as hard as ever. All federations disbanded their female teams. Consequently, the World Cup players were extremely humiliated, the 1971 tournament was never recognized and completely erased from history, and it took another twenty years for FIFA to organize an international female competition.

Today's Situation

Progress has definitely been made since the 1971 World Cup. Today, support for the sport has grown exponentially, with the 2023 World Cup generating 570 million USD. There have also been further steps to solve economic inequality. Denmark pays their male and female teams equally. Furthermore, just this January the first million euro transfer was registered when Naomi Girma left for Chelsea. Despite these advancements, a lot still needs to be done. After all, this one million euro milestone is nothing compared to the average value of Chelsea's male players, which is €31million, and we should not forget that there are still countries where women are not even allowed to attend a football game.

Vergeeten Pioniers:

feministen in de internationale betrekkingen, 1910-1939

Door Lisa Harmeling

Vrouwelijke denkers stonden aan de wieg van de internationale relaties. Velen van hen zijn vergeten. Dit verhaal belicht de vrijzinnige feministische politieke theorieën die hun tijd ver vooruit waren en vandaag nog steeds weerklinken.

Oorsprong

Internationale betrekkingen als formele discipline ontstond in het begin van de twintigste eeuw als reactie op de vernietigende aard van de Eerste Wereldoorlog. Het doel van de in 1919 opgerichte Woodrow Wilson leerstoel aan de toenmalige Wales University (nu Aberystwyth University) was het begrijpen van de oorzaken van militaire conflicten en de kennis toepassen om zo vrede te bewerkstelligen. De geschiedenis van het ontstaan en de ontwikkeling van de internationale betrekkingen is essentieel om te begrijpen hoe het vakgebied hedendaags tikt. Politieke theorieën komen op, vervallen in relevantie, passen zich aan en reageren op rivaliserend gedachtegoed. Zo reageerde het constructivisme in de jaren 80 op de positivistische benaderingen, zoals rationele keuze theorie en behaviorisme.

De geschiedschrijving van de begindagen van het vakgebied laat een vertrouwd, maar misleidend, beeld zien van de initiële ontwikkeling van internationale betrekkingen. De internationale politiek als academische discipline leek in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw eenzijdig te zijn met de dominantie van het institutionalisme en liberalisme, opgevolgd door de hegemonie van de realisten. Toch was het veld divers door invloeden van sociologen Max Weber (1864-1920) en Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). Zij legden de fundering van het constructivisme rond de 20e eeuwswisseling. Ook vrouwen dachten, schreven en droegen bij aan kwesties van vrede en oorlog, militarisme, imperialisme, diplomatie, de oprichting van een Volkenbond, politiek onderwijs voor allen en de betrekking van vrouwen bij vredesonderhandelingen sinds én voor de opkomst van Wilson's leerstoel.

Feministische theorieën lijken pas zestig jaar nadat de eerste vrouwen belangrijke bijdragen leverden aan de studie van internationale betrekkingen écht aandacht te krijgen. Boeken zoals *Beaches, Bananas & bases* (1989) van Cynthia

Enloe en *Gender in International Relations* (1992) van J. Ann Tickner worden in de historiografie aangeduid als het beginpunt voor feministische politieke benaderingen in de internationale betrekkingen. De jaren 80 worden gevierd als het decennium waarin feminisme eindelijk deel uit ging maken van de politieke studies. Ondanks deze vertraagde rol voor feministische benaderingen in de mainstream politicologie, waren er wel degelijk tussen 1910-1939 vrouwen die stukken publiceerden. Zo vinden we tussen 1915 en 1917 verschillende stukken met vooruitstrevende ideeën over de positie van vrouwen en beslechting van conflicten. *The democratic principle and international relations* uit 1915 en *Foreign policy and the people* uit 1917 werden beide geschreven door vrouwelijke denkers. De feministische theorieën uit de jaren 80 waren geen 'ontdekking', maar een terugkeer. Feminisme kwam niet te laat voor internationale betrekkingen, maar internationale betrekkingen kwam te laat voor feminisme.

Denken over oorlog en vrede



Helena Swanwick is een vergeten pionier die dacht over kwesties van oorlog en vrede met een destijds revolutionair genderperspectief. Voor de Eerste Wereldoorlog was ze bekend om haar werk en uitlatingen betreffende het vrouwelijk participatierecht in het politiek bestel. In de oorlog richtte ze haar aandacht op pacifistische gedachtegoederen, maar ze transformeerde het pacifisme door haar focus op gender issues. Swanwick benadrukte

in haar geschriften dat vrouwen een uniek perspectief hebben over maatschappij en internationale relaties door hun rol in de samenleving. Dit gemarginaliseerde perspectief kan het verschil maken tussen rampspoed en fortuin. Ze streed daarom voor de deelname van vrouwen aan vredesonderhandelingen. Zelf was ze onderdeel van de Britse delegatie voor de Volkenbond na de Eerste Wereldoorlog.

Swanwick wilde de wereld laten zien hoe oorlog vrouwen en kinderen schaden. Het maakte volgens Swanwick niet uit of de doelen van een oorlog nobel waren of dat staten volgens het jus ad bellum principe in hun recht stonden om een toevlucht te mogen nemen tot de inzet van strijdkrachten, het resultaat was altijd hetzelfde: ongekende vernietiging. Het thuisfront blijft in oorlog niet gespaard en vrouwen en kinderen zijn daar vaak het slachtoffer van.

“When aviators drop bombs, when guns bombard fortified towns, it is not possible to avoid the women and children who may chance to be in the way”

Vredige conflictbeslechting van internationale schermutselingen door middel van tribunalen was haar prioriteit. Ze meende dat het beschermen van huis en haard betere kans van slagen had door middel van de opbouw van infrastructuur die positieve vrede op de langere termijn mogelijk maakte, ten afzien van de wispelturigheid van oorlog. Daarnaast maakte Swanwick deel uit van verenigingen die kwesties van oorlog en vrede bespraken. In de twintigste eeuw lobbyden deze groepen om vrouwen te laten participeren in vredesonderhandelingen en het effect van oorlog op vrouwen en kinderen op de politieke agenda van staten te krijgen.



Het Internationale Congres van Vrouwen

In 1915 werd in Den Haag het Internationale Congres van vrouwen georganiseerd. Meer dan duizend vrouwelijke denkers en diplomaten kwamen op 28 april bijeen om te praten over de staat van de wereld, in het bijzonder over de notie dat vrouwen konden worden beschermd tijdens een oorlog. Uiteindelijk bleek echter het tegendeel namelijk waar, aangezien vrouwen en kinderen onevenredig hard werden getroffen door oorlog. Hieruit kwam voort dat mannen niet de enige mogen zijn die beslissen over kwesties van oorlog en vrede.

De belangrijkste lobbygroep was de Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), opgericht tijdens het Internationale Congres van Vrouwen. De WILPF zette zich in voor vrouwelijke representatie tijdens vredesbesprekingen, vredesmissies en meer gelijkheid onder alle mannen en vrouwen. Het was een smeltkroes van verschillende feministische theorieën uit de periode 1910-1939. Het laten horen van gemarginaliseerde stemmen en het idee van gendered pacifisme komt zowel naar voren in Swanwick's werk, de WILPF en de resoluties van het congres.

Tijdens het congres van 1915 werden er twintig resoluties aangenomen die als inspiratie dienden voor het veertien puntenplan van President Woodrow Wilson uit 1918. Het Congres beval aan om een conferentie van neutrale staten te organiseren, zodat staten voortdurend in contact stonden en er gemakkelijker aan conflictpreventie kon worden gedaan. Helena Swanwick gaf de

voorkeur aan een dergelijk concert van Europa en keurde de retoriek van de balance of power af. Drie jaar later presenteerde Wilson zijn beroemde veertien punten, waarbij het belangrijkste en tevens laatste punt voorstelde om een volkenbond op te richten om wereldvrede te bevorderen door middel van een permanent communicatiekanaal en garanties voor politieke onafhankelijkheid. Vrouwen waren hem voorgegaan door hun eigen league op te richten.



De echo's van de feministen uit het verleden dringen nu ook nog door op het politieke discours van de Verenigde Naties. Zo stelt resolutie 1325 (2000) van de veiligheidsraad dat er een gender perspectief moet worden toegepast op vredesmissies en veiligheidsbeleid, hiermee wordt erkend dat vrouwen en mannen verschillende behoeften en ervaringen hebben tijdens een conflict. Bovendien benadrukte de resolutie het recht van vrouwen om mee te doen met vredesonderhandelingen. Dit had een kopie kunnen zijn van het Congres, waarbij destijds al steun was voor het idee dat bij vredesonderhandelingen en conflictpreventie delegaties van verschillende belangengroepen, waaronder vrouwen aanwezig moeten zijn. Naast Helena Swanwick staan nog talloze andere vergeten pioniers die samen met haar hun stempel hebben gedrukt op de internationale relaties. 75 jaar later worden de ambities van de vergeten pioniers uit de internationale betrekkingen werkelijkheid.

More Than A President's Wife: The Power and Influence of U.S. First Ladies

By Esmée Widdershoven

Gender inequality is one of the world's most crucial issues, penetrating all trades, from office settings to political spheres, and the world of sports. With over 3.5 billion fans, football is the world's largest sport. It's also a setting that women have been fighting for a place in for more than a century, with many of those efforts starting in the 1971 female World Cup. However, if you google "first female world cup" you will get no mention of the Copa 71. But why is that?

Influence in The Early Years

Historically, marriage was one of the few ways women could gain social and political influence. This applied to First Ladies as well, as their influence was "mediated by strict social gender norms and expectations". While Martha Washington (1789-1797) set the precedent for First Ladies to "act as social hostesses responsible for organising and attending formal Presidential social functions", some of her successors saw the opportunity to use their position to wield strategic political influence, rather than merely overseeing formal events. First Ladies like Dolley Madison (1809-1817), who was renowned for her social skills, exerted significant political influence. She "strategically assigned seating at formal functions to group her husband's foes apart from his supporters." Similarly, Julia Grant (1869-1877) "skillfully used formal social functions to enhance the image of the Grant presidency, bringing positivity to an otherwise uninventive presidential term." This shows that even the earliest First Ladies have more political influence than the history books show.



While First Ladies like Dolley Madison and Julia Grant demonstrated the potential for political influence within their social roles, the expectations placed on them remained largely traditional. Even as social and gender norms began to shift in the late 19th century, the role of First Ladies did not immediately reflect these changes. Most continued to focus on social duties rather than advocating for societal issues. Though Lucy Hayes (1877-1881) was a notable exception. She was the first First Lady to graduate from college, and advocated for the Temperance Movement, with its goal to reduce domestic violence. An issue that disproportionately impacts women.

Expanding Visibility and Influence

In the late 19th century, increasing media attention began to reshape public expectations and First Ladies became more visible figures, allowing them to extend their influence beyond White House social functions. One of the earliest examples of this was Frances Cleveland (1886-1888), whose wedding to President Grover Cleveland in the White House garnered a lot of attention from the press and public. This showed that First Ladies were becoming public figures in their own right. She extended this attention to her role as a co-campaigner during President Cleveland's second and third campaigns, demonstrating how media exposure could amplify a First Lady's influence. As media attention and societal changes continued to elevate the role of First Ladies, some began to take on more active responsibilities in the White House. Edith Roosevelt (1901-1909) "transformed White House operations and the home itself during her tenure." In addition to the numerous public appearances she made, she became the first First Lady to hire her own staff, increasing the influence of the First Ladies in administrative and policy change.

Though the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote, and marked a significant moment in women's rights, there was a "public backlash against advocates of women's rights." In response to this, some First Ladies, such as Florence Harding (1921-1923) and Grace Coolidge (1923-1929) took a more traditional approach, focusing on social duties rather than advocacy, policy, or administrative influence.



From the mid-20th century onwards, major technological advancements and changing societal norms meant that First Ladies could increasingly pursue issues they were passionate about.

This new era saw First Ladies like Eleanor Roosevelt (1933-1945) break new ground. Roosevelt was the first to hold her own press conferences for female reporters, which “played an important function in calling attention to her as a role model for women in modern American society.” By using her platform to engage in policy and advocacy, she became a powerful political force. Similarly, Jacqueline Kennedy (1961-1963) leveraged her position to be a political ally to the president. Through her dedication to the arts and historic preservation — most notably by establishing the White House Historical Association — she not only bolstered artistic morale but also supported President Kennedy’s Cold War strategy to portray the United States as the epitome of freedom and cultural achievement.

Like Roosevelt and Kennedy, Rosalynn Carter (1977-1981) also utilised her position to shape policy and advocate for causes close to her heart. Rosalynn’s influence expanded beyond traditional duties, as she hosted White House events, attended cabinet meetings, testified before Congress to support mental health reforms, and traveled as an envoy to Central and South America to engage in policy discussions with leaders, all while championing women’s rights and international diplomacy. Additionally, when in 1978, the Office of the First Lady was defined more clearly, Rosalynn set a precedent by being the first First Lady to keep an office in the east wing and appointing a First Lady Chief of Staff.

First Ladies as Advocates and Policy Influencers

As the role of the First Lady continued to evolve, other First Ladies also began to take on leadership roles, particularly in advocacy campaigns. For example, Nancy Reagan (1981-1989) led the campaign “Just Say No” anti-drug program. She also “addressed the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on the subject in 1988 – the first sitting First Lady to do so.” And Barbara Bush (1989-1993) campaigned for improving literacy. By the end of the twentieth century “campaigning, broadcasting public appearances, and identifying with a specific cause or issue were commonly practiced and expected.”

Building on the advocacy efforts of her predecessors, Hillary Clinton (1993-2001) took the role of First Lady to new heights by directly influencing public policy and governance. She served as a close advisor to the president and chaired the Task Force on National Health Care Reform. She also “led the fight to pass the Children’s Health Insurance Program; worked to increase funding for research and treatment of cancer, AIDS, and juvenile diabetes among other illnesses; chaired Save America’s Treasures; and supported gun control efforts.”



In 2008, 219 years after the country’s founding, the United States welcomed its first African American First Lady, Michelle Obama (2008–2016). During her time in the White House, she became an inspiration for many women through her advocacy and initiatives. Another milestone was reached in 2020 when a First Lady maintained an independent paid career outside the White House. First Lady Dr. Biden (2020-2024) is an educator at Northern Virginia Community College and continued teaching while in the White House.

The current First Lady Melania Trump (2016-2020; 2025-) had a very low profile first term as First Lady. This makes her unique among modern First Ladies, who have all been very visible, and outspoken in the public eye. During her first term, she broke many traditions set by earlier First Ladies. For one, she initially lived in New York instead of the White House, after Trump won the presidency in 2016. All this did not mean she lacked dedication. She is passionate about many issues affecting children and helping military families. We will be watching closely to see how she shapes her second term in the White House.

Weak Institutions, Strong Movements: The Uneven Implementation of Abortion Policy in Latin America.

This article examines the gap between the laws of abortion and its practice in Latin America, with a particular focus on the interaction between social movements and institutional frameworks. It shows how ineffective institutions often obstruct the realisation of laws, which are ‘sophisticated’ even when the legislation has been accepted as ‘liberal’ in nature. The authors have provided a comparative analysis of a number of countries in the region, paying special attention to the ones where a large proportion of abortion has been practised clandestinely despite severe legal restrictions on it. They also look at instances where liberal legislation is not implemented ‘in good faith’ because of public apathy or lower institutional capability. The study suggests the importance of legal activism in advocacy for legal reforms and their effective execution. In so much as social movements are proven to enable or foster the passing of laws, the research claims that to achieve real change, their participation must go beyond legal measures. The implications of the study could not be generalized, owing to the reliance on case studies, which is also true of the lack of longitudinal evidence to assess the impact of the phenomena in question over time. This research contributes to political science by explaining in detail how the legal structure, the strength of institutions, and social movements interact during the implementation of policies. Additionally, it provides valuable information for policymakers and activists who try to transform laws into practice, especially where the ability of the state is weak.

Elverdin, A. S. (2025). Weak institutions, strong movements: The uneven implementation of abortion policy in Latin America. PS: Political Science & Politics, 58(1), 56–59.

Green Monetary Policy Measures and Central Bank Mandates: A Comparative Political Economy Analysis

The article presents an examination of how central banks incorporate environmental factors into their monetary policies, aimed at grasping the perceived impact of “green measures” on addressing climate change. Through a comparative method, the authors conduct a thorough examination of the diverse measures implemented by several central banks, which involve a greater involvement in evaluating climate change risks related to financial stability and a proactive approach to sustainable investments. It appears that there is a considerable difference in the application of these measures in different central banks, which the authors explain to be a factor of institutional implementation as well as the domestic political economy of the country. One of the strongest benefits of the article is the connection of these policymakers’ environmental concerns with the sustainability of the economy in relation to monetary policy which overall helps central banks to mitigate the effects of climate change. However, the authors highlight issues of insufficiently coordinated policy and lack of clear comprehensive rules for green monetary policy implementation as a challenge. As the article was focused on developed countries, it would be for further research to ascertain whether these effects are the same in developing countries that may face resource constraints.. This research paper contributes to the field of political economy by highlighting the changing function of central banks in tackling global issues such as climate change. Additionally, it underscores the possibility for monetary policy to promote sustainable economic practices, providing practical guidance for financial institutions and policymakers as they navigate the shift to more environmentally-friendly economies.

Matos Rosa, S. (2025). Green monetary policy measures and central bank mandates: A comparative political economy analysis. Politics and Governance, 13, Article 8919.

Political Science Worldwide

By Cosmin Tanasă

The Power of Trump's Big Lie: Identity Fusion, Internalizing Misinformation, and Support for Trump

This article examines the identity fusion concept and how it affects the acceptance of misinformation among followers of Donald Trump. Researchers of the study shows that identity fusion – which is when someone is deeply aligned with a certain leader or group – can make a person accept unsupported claims with no evidence in reality, such as Trump's allegation of electoral fraud. The study also pulled data from a variety of sources to examine the fusion of identities and political participation with a degree of group solidarity and justification for partisan aggressiveness. The result of the study indicates that identity fusion does significantly enhance the internalization of misinformation as a political reality to the point of groups becoming even more politically and chauvinistically loyal. One major advantage of the article is the interdisciplinary approach, bringing together psychology and political science for a better understanding of the problem. Besides that, a drawback of the study is the lack of attention to other countries that might show variations in the U.S. findings. This in-depth research gives an important meaning to the study of political misinformation by highlighting the role of identity in shaping public beliefs and behaviour. It provides important insights into the issues of misinformation in politics and emphasises the necessity for methods to combat strongly established political identities.

Moniz, P., & Swann, W. B. (2025). The power of Trump's big lie: Identity fusion, internalizing misinformation, and support for Trump. PS: Political Science & Politics, [FirstView], 1–6.

Power Shifts and Progress in Central Asia

The essay discusses Central Asia's remarkable economic advancement and regional cooperation in 2024, highlighting the area's increasing autonomy amid a challenging geopolitical environment. The authors employ a thorough method to explore the resilience characteristics that facilitate this progress, alongside the actions taken by Central Asian nations to enhance their global economic and political position. Furthermore, it also highlights significant trends like increased East-West trade and cooperation in transportation, agriculture, and trade sectors, which played a vital role in Kazakhstan's 3.6% GDP growth and the 6.5% GDP increases in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Moreover, diplomatic meetings like the sixth annual Consultative Meeting of Central Asian Heads of State in Astana, which involved leaders from India, Japan, and Germany, showcase attempts to expand connections beyond conventional allies such as Russia and China. One of the article's strongest aspects is its emphasis on how Central Asian nations strategically adjust to geopolitical changes while sustaining economic robustness. Nevertheless, the authors emphasize the challenges of reconciling regional integration with external forces while maintaining long-term stability amid global uncertainties. This study adds to the domain of international political economy by demonstrating the changing role of Central Asia as a rising economic and diplomatic power. Moreover, it emphasizes the opportunity for regional nations to enhance their autonomy while participating in multilateral collaboration, offering important perspectives on the evolving power relations in international politics.

Pomfret, R. (2025). Power shifts and progress in Central Asia. East Asia Forum. Available online: <https://doi.org/10.59425/eabc.1737583200>

Indigenous Women in Brazil: The Power of Intersectionality

By Anna Vogt

Despite making up less than 1% of the Brazilian population, indigenous women often find themselves at the heart of Brazilian politics, advocating not only women's and indigenous rights but also environmental protection. Their unique position at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalisation, allows them to represent both specific and broad societal concerns. Their intersectionality has allowed them to transform a disadvantage to their advantage, using it as a tool to ensure their voices, and that of others, are heard.

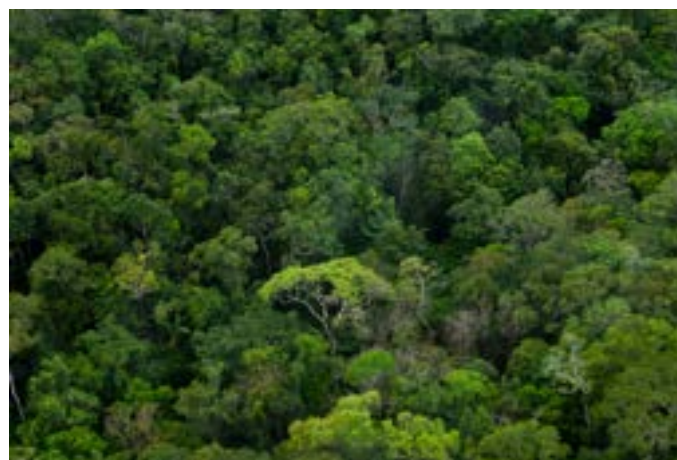
Brazil's society is largely shaped by its colonial history, contributing to both gender and ethnic discrimination within the country. The patriarchal structures in Brazil date back to Portuguese rule, where the Catholic Church had a large influence on society, shaping women's roles then and today. According to the OECD women in Brazil are thought to earn 27.3% less than men, which rises to 34.1% when controlling for factors like education, experience, and industry. This disproportionately affects women who are

part of other marginalised communities, with white women being twice more likely to complete their higher education compared to Black women.

Also stemming from its colonial history, indigenous communities were long victims of slavery and cultural oppression, colonists holding themselves at a morally higher level. Echoes of this sad past can still be heard today. According to Human

Rights Watch, Brazil's president in 2022, Jair Bolsonaro, attempted to introduce a bill that would remove Indigenous rights from the law. Amplifying the discrimination and oppression indigenous women face on top of their gender.

With threats to their communities come threats to the rights and protection of their lands. The Amazon rainforest, home to many indigenous peoples, has faced large-scale deforestation since the 1960s. It reached an all-time record high in 2021 under Jair Bolsonaro, putting not only indigenous peoples and their land in danger, but also the global environment and population.





Indigenous women have taken center stage in Brazil when it comes to fighting this threat. Groups like the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) and the National Articulation of Indigenous Women Warriors of Ancestry (ANMIGA) play a massive role in providing indigenous women with the platform to do so. Most notably in 2023, ANMIGA organised the Third Indigenous Women's March, where over 6,000 indigenous women gathered in front of a government building in Brasilia. They demanded the rejection of Bill 490, aiming to restrict the rights of indigenous peoples to their land, among other things including equal rights for indigenous women.

While protests like the Third Indigenous Women's March undoubtedly empower indigenous women, it is the recent political changes that have given them more institutional power. After Bolsonaro's loss in the 2022 elections, President Lula's administration stepped in, enabling more Indigenous women in Congress. Most notably, Lula appointed Sonia Guajajara as the first Indigenous woman to become a minister in Brazil, and the first person to take on the role of Minister of Indigenous Peoples.

As indigenous women gain more representation in and outside government, it is important to note that the influence of the far right is rising. Trump's second victory, someone who has long inspired Bolsonaro's politics, raises the question: if someone like Bolsonaro were to win the elections 2026 elections once again, would this mean that all the progress made will fade?



Vrouwen de buik snoeren

Door Marie Spruit



In de Verenigde Staten sterven steeds meer vrouwen tijdens zwangerschappen aan voorvallen die medisch makkelijk te verhelpen zijn. Doktoren durven hun patiënten niet meer te helpen, omdat ze bang zijn in de gevangenis terecht te komen. In 2022 is de zaak *Roe v. Wade* herroepen door het hoogerechtshof van de VS. Hierdoor mogen staten abortus illegaal verklaren en dit roept belangrijke vragen op; wat zijn de gevolgen voor de Amerikaanse vrouw? En wat is abortus eigenlijk? Donald Trump is onlangs voor de tweede keer geïnaugureerd als president van de Verenigde Staten. Dit betekent een hoop, waaronder het feit dat Trump weer mag bepalen wie er in het hoogerechtshof komen. De rechters in dit gerechtshof worden namelijk genomineerd door de president en daarna verkozen door de senaat. Aangezien Trump nu een meerderheid heeft in de senaat, heeft hij veel macht op dit gebied.

Het hoogerechtshof mag belangrijke beslissingen maken. Hun taak is om de constitutie te interpreteren, en dit kan vaak op verschillende manieren. Eerst werd het recht op privacy en vrijheid geïnterpreteerd als dat de vrouw zelf kan kiezen wat ze met haar lichaam deed. In 2022 echter, werd dit geïnterpreteerd op een manier waarbij de 'baby' altijd recht op het leven heeft en dus werd *Roe v. Wade* herroepen. Nu kunnen staten zelf over hun abortuswetten beslissen.

De grote beslissing wekt discussies op over waar abortus begint en eindigt, en dat zorgt voor nog grotere problemen. Zowel dokters als staten proberen abortus te definiëren, zodat ze weten wat ze wel of niet moeten toestaan. Zo is er onduidelijkheid over wanneer een situatie levensbedreigend is voor een vrouw. Veel staten maken in hun abortuswetten uitzonderingen voor zwangere vrouwen die in levensbedreigende situaties verkeren. Maar als een dokter niet weet wanneer hij een uitzondering kan maken of niet, kan dit leiden tot ernstige afloop voor de vrouw. Zo laten artsen zwangere vrouwen met kanker nog zieker worden, omdat

ze normaal de foetus zouden aborteren maar dat niet meer is toegestaan. De medici willen namelijk niet in de gevangenis belanden, maar moreel gezien is het een lastige kwestie.

Op fysiek, maar ook op mentaal vlak, heeft de nieuwe regeling een enorm slechte invloed op de Amerikaanse vrouw. Er is namelijk onderzoek gedaan naar wat het met de mentale gezondheid van een vrouw doet als haar een abortus geweigerd wordt. Zo is er een grotere kans op armoede, wat weer resulteert in stress en schaamte bijvoorbeeld. Daarnaast doen vrouwen zichzelf vaker pijn om een miskraam op te wekken. Naast dat dit zeer gevaarlijk is, neemt het ook mentale schade met zich mee.

Kortom zien we overal om ons heen dat er vreselijke beslissingen gemaakt worden over vrouwen, vaak door mannen die er zelf niets mee te maken hebben. Voor de afschuwelijke gevolgen van deze beslissing die door een kleine groep mensen is gemaakt, moet meer aandacht komen. Met Donald Trump als staatshoofd van de VS zal het zeker niet minder gevaarlijk worden voor de vrouw, dus we moeten alles goed in de gaten blijven houden en ons zeker niet de mond, of buik laten snoeren.



Invisible Borders: Women, Statelessness, and Legal Justice

By Aleksander Leon Chmiel

Since the end of World War II, the right to a nationality has been recognised by the international community. Despite this, under international law it is vaguely defined, and is often considered as a simple formality for travel or voting. However, for millions, citizenship means much more, as it is a means to access fundamental human rights like healthcare, employment, education, and legal protection. Stateless individuals, being those who are denied citizenship, are among the most marginalised, with women being particularly vulnerable.

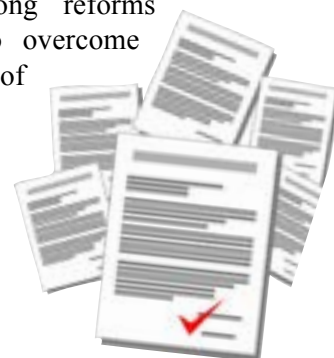
Statelessness leaves individuals undocumented and without state protection, which makes it difficult to estimate the impact of it worldwide. Nevertheless, gender discrimination is considered a major factor that contributes to statelessness globally, intensified by patriarchal nationality laws that deny women the right to acquire, retain, or pass on their nationality to their children and spouses. Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women orders that “state parties grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change, or retain their nationality.” Attempts have been made at establishing equal citizenship laws, nonetheless, to achieve this individual states must coordinate their actions, and civil society plays a crucial role in its positive development. However, in many countries, civil societies are not strong enough to effectively advocate for these changes.

Article 8 of the 1930 Hague Convention on Nationality Laws asserts that as a result of marriage a woman loses her original nationality when she takes on her foreign husband’s nationality. However, if a woman’s nationality law requires her to lose her nationality upon marrying a foreign man, this can only take place if the husband’s nationality law grants her his nationality. In many cases, nationality laws are vague and non-binding, providing no clear guidance on how statelessness can be prevented or how having a nationality can be guaranteed. Instead,

they are only recommendations that give the child a right to nationality at birth or prevent its deprivation. For example, over 20 countries in Africa deny women the right to pass on the nationality to a foreign husband, and when marrying her spouse, she loses her citizenship and cannot pass it onto her children.

In 2014, a UNHCR report was published on statelessness, which estimates that out of the 10 million stateless people worldwide, half are women. There are 2 types of statelessness: de jure, people who lack nationality under any state’s laws, as well as de facto stateless people, who are unable to prove their residency or nationality. Many stateless women fall under de facto statelessness, which is not covered by the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless persons. De facto stateless women lack crucial documents such as birth certificates and therefore lack identification necessary to pursue employment or state protection.

As a way to combat this global issue, there is pressure to abolish dependent nationality. Aside from the reasons mentioned above, it can be a complication for divorce decisions, as when women are in abusive marriages, they may be afraid to leave, as it would come with loss of citizenship, and therefore access to human rights. All in all, there are calls for a global framework determining nationality rights, which would work in the following way: an individual’s legal right to citizenship should be dependent on the country where the person is ‘connected to,’ such as their residence. As a result, they would be able to exercise their economic and political rights to a full extent. There is still a long way to go to ensure women’s autonomy. Strong reforms must be implemented to overcome the patriarchal nature of nationality laws.



The Daughters of the Iron Lady

By Aiden Bennett

In the weeks following the loss of Kamala Harris in the US presidential election, former US president Bill Clinton made an interesting statement: “I think it would probably be easier for a conservative Republican woman to win” referring to the presidency. This may seem counterintuitive at first, considering Republicans have been wanting to overturn a landmark case for reproductive rights, Roe vs Wade, since the 80s and succeeded in 2022. Yet when one thinks about notable women in politics in modern history, a trend starts to emerge. Namely, the most prominent female politicians from the Western world tend to come from parties with a right-wing or conservative profile.

Precedent, Well Actually Prime Minister

The names that may pop up in one’s head, are memorable leaders such as Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen from the CDU, Alice Weidel from the AFD, and Marine Le Pen from the National Rally. Additionally, we can think about the British Conservative party, who were the only ones thus far to deliver female prime ministers to the UK. One of these Tory women stands tall above the rest, with her influence still being felt after her passing. Being Britain’s longest serving prime minister and the first female prime minister in Europe, it is no other than Margaret Thatcher.

In post-war Britain, there was a consensus between the Labor and Conservative parties to uphold a certain economic model. Mainly to have a government that was greatly involved in the economy with the goal of reducing inequality. This was highlighted by economic management from the government, encouraging and having strong trade unions, having state-owned enterprises, and promoting the welfare state. Thatcher came in and threw a sledgehammer to this idea, which is known today as Thatcherism.

Thatcher is ideologically known for her ideas of small government and individualism. Privatizing state-owned businesses such as British Airways, British Gas, and British Telecom. Further features included low taxation, the sale of public housing to the tenants, policies of deregulation, reducing the influence of unions, and privatising public services. Thatcher’s principal idea was that the government should get out of the hair of citizens and companies and allow citizens to take responsibility for their own lives. With Thatcher claiming that there is no such thing as a society, there are only individuals and families. Thus one must not cast their problems on society and seek help from the government to solve their problems.

Such bold actions and words require an even bolder per-

sonality. A personality and political style which the prime minister known as the Iron Lady certainly had. She was especially known for her steadfastness and strong certainty in her beliefs; having a confrontational style of leadership and not being a fan of consensus. Which went so far that emeritus professor June Purvis said:

“She [Thatcher] believed she was always right and that was her tremendous weakness”

Considering Thatcher’s legacy it should come as no surprise that the Iron Lady had an influence on the female



leaders of our modern day. Weidel considers Thatcher to be her role model and Merkel described Thatcher to be “one of the greatest leaders of her time in global politics”, which should come as no surprise. Considering that Thatcher played an instrumental role in ending the Cold War and perhaps also in Merkel’s life, who grew up in East Germany and started her political career following the fall of the Berlin wall. Thus it is possible that Thatcher’s influence goes beyond these two women, serving as a role model for many other female politicians in the modern day.

The Conservative Advantage

In 2018 there was a study done by Santana and Aguilar that examined the effects of party ideology on gender representation. The researchers examined the representation of women in the context of the Spanish regional parliaments for the left-wing Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSEO), and conservative People’s Party (PP). The researchers found that the left is better at letting women gain entry into parliament, yet the right is better at maintaining women in parliament. As the authors argue

“So, left-wing parties are better gate openers, but right-wing parties are, unexpectedly, better career promoters”

They offer multiple plausible reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly they posit that conservative parties already have a lack of female applicants thus they may feel inclined to keep on their female MPs to ensure women are still represented within parliament. It is also possible that left-wing parties value renovation, replacing existing MPs with new ones, more than conservative parties do, who value experience more. The authors also try to explain this phenomenon through the use of gender quotas in left and right-wing parties. Since right-wing parties tend to not have gender quotas and assert a more “merit-based” system, it is possible that the women that do get through acquire more respect and political clout, thus their likelihood of staying in parliament increases, vs those in left-wing parties with gender quotas. Lastly, as Verge & Astudillo pointed out, this phenomenon could also be due to right-wing parties employing a compensatory strategy, since they do not typically have gender quotas. Resulting in a woman being ap-

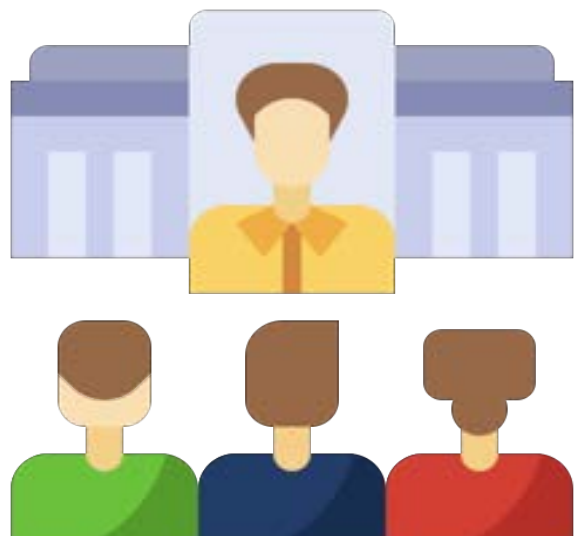
pointed to high-ranking positions.

Additionally, women also tend to have an advantage when it comes to recruitment and candidate selection in conservative/right-wing parties compared to left-wing parties. Parties on the right traditionally have fewer elements of internal party democracy and thus a more exclusive manner of selecting candidates than parties on the left. It is this exclusive selection method that works in favour of female candidates since women perform worse with more inclusive forms of selection. Essentially the more people participate in selecting candidates the less chance women have of being selected.

Women could become prominent right-wing politicians simply due to the overall popularity of the political right. Data collected on prime ministers within EU member states between 1979 and 2015, found that there were more than twice as many more prime ministers who came from a party on the right than from the left. If we only examine the female prime ministers it was found that 85% came from a party on the right.

A More Conservative Future?

With the rise of women as leaders on the far right, it may be within the realm of possibility that they may serve as role models as Thatcher did for them. Especially someone like Giorgia Meloni, who has become prime minister and whose future role within the EU may prove crucial due to her strong ties with Donald Trump. Yet there may very well be a superstar woman from the left waiting to emerge and become the future generation’s Iron Lady.



The Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Medical Research in the United States

By Chloé Orr

For decades, medical research has been shaped by a fundamental flaw: the underrepresentation of women. Despite making up half the global population, women continue to be overlooked as research subjects, leading to gaps in medical knowledge that have alarming consequences for their health. This issue is even more severe for women of color. While strides have been made in increasing women's representation in leadership and policy, the medical field continues to lag behind.

The Gender Gap in Medical Research

Historically, medical research has long been centered on male bodies, operating under the flawed assumption that findings apply equally to all genders. The exclusion of women from clinical trials and research has severe consequences for their health. Many diseases present differently in men and women, yet most diagnostic criteria and treatment guidelines are based on studies conducted primarily on men. For example, heart disease, the leading cause of death among women worldwide, often shows different symptoms in women than in men. Women are more likely to experience nausea, fatigue, and shortness of breath rather than the classic chest pain associated with heart attacks. However, because most cardiac research has historically focused on men, women are less likely to be accurately diagnosed or receive treatment in time. Beyond heart disease, conditions such as depression, osteoporosis, and autoimmune diseases disproportionately affect women but are still not adequately studied in female populations. This often results in delayed diagnoses, ineffective treatments, and poorer health outcomes for millions of women.



Despite growing awareness of these disparities, recent research underlines how gender biases persist. In a 2023 article, *The BMJ* highlighted this continued exclusion of

women, emphasizing that gender biases in research persist despite acknowledgment of the issue. This article points to subtle consequences that can emerge when women's representation grows within a given field. When progress in gender representation is overstated, it can create complacency, hindering further efforts to close the gap.

Studies also show that women remain underrepresented in randomized controlled trials (RCTs) across different medical fields. A review published in *Trials* found that the median enrollment rate of women in RCTs is just 41%. This percentage decreases as women age, going as low as 33% for women sixty-three years and older. Even in studies of diseases that disproportionately affect women, female participation is often insufficient. The scarcity of representation of elderly women also creates a lack of crucial knowledge in the risks or benefits of any given treatment. This skewed representation leads to incomplete data on how diseases are presented in women and how they respond to treatments, creating a dangerous gap in medical knowledge. The impact of medical underrepresentation is even more devastating for women of color. Due to both gender and racial biases, these women face higher rates of misdiagnosis, inadequate treatment, and medical neglect. A *Cornell Law Review* article highlights the multiple factors behind this disparity, including historical medical abuses, lack of trust in the healthcare system, and socioeconomic barriers that limit participation in research. Women of color face stronger effects of gender and racial biases, leading to disproportionately poor health. One stark example is the racial disparities in maternal healthcare. In the United States (U.S.), "Black women are three to four times as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women". This crisis is partly due to a lack of research on how racial and socioeconomic factors influence maternal health outcomes. Additionally, a 2016 paper by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that death rates linked to breast cancer were 40% higher among black women than white women, yet their representation in health research remains low.

Cardio-vascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death among Hispanic women, Black women, and Asian women in the U.S. Social Determinants of Health and barriers to healthcare access are most often due to structural racism and sexism. These important factors complicate the prevention and management of CVD and other health issues. The failure to include diverse populations in research leads to treatments that may not be equally effective for all racial and ethnic groups, further worsening health inequalities.

Solutions and The Role of Policy Change

To address these disparities, researchers, policymakers, and medical institutions need to take steps ensuring that women, and particularly women of color, are adequately represented in medical research. Governments should require clinical trials to include diverse participants by mandating gender and racial inclusion in research. The National Institutes of Health has already implemented policies requiring the inclusion of women in federally funded research, but stronger enforcement mechanisms are needed.

Incentivizing Participation - Financial support, child care assistance, and transportation reimbursement can help remove roadblocks that normally prevent women from participating in clinical trials. Cultural and language barriers should also be addressed to make studies more accessible to all. Women need to be informed about the importance of their participation in clinical research. Advocacy groups, media outlets, and healthcare providers can play a crucial role in spreading awareness and encouraging more women to take part in medical studies. Finally, medical schools and training programs should emphasize the importance of sex-specific research and the impact of gender biases in healthcare. Physicians must be able to recognize and address these disparities in their practice. To properly tackle such problems, a shift in how women's health is perceived is essential, particularly in policymaking, where it must be prioritized rather than treat

ed as an afterthought. In a country like the U.S., where healthcare is not available at an affordable rate for all, there must be policy changes for such solutions to be correctly put in place and respected. This is not an issue that only regards the healthcare industry, but an issue that requires a change in the entire system in the U.S.

Globally, we have seen some progress. Spain has applied gender quotas for leadership in public institutions, Germany requires hospitals to report on gender representation in leadership roles, and Nordic countries are already far ahead when it comes to policies on gender equality. While these are important examples of evolution, there is no true progress in representation. Women dominate the healthcare workforce, especially in nursing and general practice, but

are still underrepresented in leadership and research. Despite the progress so far, the misconception that gender gaps in medical studies have been resolved only slows further advancements. Without urgent intervention, women will continue to receive medical care that is based on data that does not accurately represent them. Ensuring equal representation in medical research is not just a scientific question—it is a matter of social justice. Women, particularly those from marginalized communities,

deserve medical care that is guided by research that accurately reflects their needs.

Greater public awareness and political advocacy are essential to closing the gender gap in medical research. Women should not have to fight for fair healthcare, yet history has shown that progress only happens when the issue is actively challenged. By continuing to push for inclusive medical research, we can move toward a future where all patients receive care based on research that truly represents them.



Four Women Who Changed World Politics

By Nelli Danner

Throughout history, men have dominated the political arena. However, time and again, remarkable women have challenged norms, used their voice and reshaped the political landscape. From ancient queens with great power to modern leaders handling difficult challenges, the following women have shown the world that leadership isn't limited by gender.

Cleopatra VII



Cleopatra VII (69-30) BCE: Cleopatra VII, the last ruler of ancient Egypt, ascended to power in a politically turbulent era. She formed important political alliances with powerful Roman leaders like Julius Caesar to protect Egypt's sovereignty and thus secured both military support and political legitimacy. Her legacy continues beyond her death, shaping our understanding of things like beauty, power and love.

Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai (1940–2011):

Wangari Maathai was a true achiever. After being the first woman to get her doctor's degree in 1971 in East and Central Africa, she was active in the National Council of Kenyan Women. There, she first put forward the



idea of planting trees collectively to improve the living conditions of everyone, which later gave rise to the famous "Green Belt Movement". The movement was a huge success, planting over 51 million trees. In 2004, as the first African woman, she received the Peace Nobel prize for it. Maathai later served on boards of several organizations, like for example the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board on Disarmament and was elected to the Kenyan parliament with an overwhelming vote of 98% in 2002.

Queen Elizabeth I

Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603):

When Queen Elizabeth I took over the throne of England in 1558, the state was almost bankrupt. In just 15 years, she managed to eliminate her regime's debt and restore financial stability. Furthermore In 1559, the "Act of Uniformity" was passed, establishing a compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism which had previously caused a deep divide and persecution in England. Additionally, her defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1558 elevated England from poverty to prominence and transformed it into a global superpower.



Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks (1913–2005):

Rosa Parks is often called the "mother of the civil rights movement". She sparked the fight for racial equality when she refused to let a white man take her bus seat in Montgomery,



Alabama, on December 1st 1955. Her arrest brought about the "Montgomery Bus Boycott", led by Dr. MLK and resulting in the desegregation of buses 13 months later. Parks was given the Presidential medal of freedom and was the first woman to have her casket placed in front of the Capitol, an honor usually reserved to U.S. presidents.

These and many more women in history have shown us that women have a place in politics and can change the world in the same ways men can. The path to gender equality in the political landscape is still long but women like the ones mentioned above have made the gap a little bit smaller and the world a little fairer.



Zijn er nog wel dubbele standaarden voor mannen en vrouwen in de politiek?

Door Evy Verbrugge

Tijdens de Amerikaanse presidentsverkiezingen van 5 november 2024 ervaarde Kamela Harris veel meer kritiek dan Donald Trump. Zo omschreef CNN commentator Van Jones: “terwijl Trump rechteloos mag zijn, moet Kamela Harris vlekkeloos zijn.” Daarnaast circuleert het gerucht dat ze haar weg naar de top zou hebben geslapen, verspreid door politiek commentator Megyn Kelly -- voormalig Fox News presentator en moderator voor de voorverkiezingen van de Republikeinen. Tegelijkertijd komt Trump weg met een criminele veroordeling; het niet erkennen van een voorgaande verkiezingsuitslag; en onduidelijke uitspraken. Oftewel, is er sprake van dubbele standaarden in de politiek voor mannen en vrouwen?

Echter, dit is lastig te bewijzen door, onder andere, de vele factoren die stemkeuze beïnvloeden. Hoewel onder verschillende onderdelen die voor kiezers bepalend zijn, er wel bewijs wordt gevonden voor dubbele standaarden. Een van die onderdelen, die vaak als bijzonder belangrijk wordt gezien voor het voorspellen van hoe het een kandidaat zal afaan, is de perceptie van een kandidaat zijn competentie. In de studie van Ditonto wordt gekeken of er anders wordt gereageerd op informatie over de competentie van een kandidaat als diegene een vrouw of een man is. Zo hebben stereotypische evaluaties invloed op het type informatie dat onderzoeksdeelnemers over de kandidaten opzoeken. Participanten zoeken meer informatie op over de competentie van een vrouwelijke kandidaat, dan bij een mannelijke kandidaat. Dit suggereert dat kiezers competentie belangrijker vinden als ze beslissen of ze op een vrouwelijke kandidaat gaan stemmen. Door de aanname dat vrouwen minder competent zijn, is dit stereotype-bevestigende informatie. Hierdoor is twijfel aan competentie schadelijker bij vrouwen dan bij mannen. In het geval van kwalijke informatie geven onderzoeksdeelnemers vaak het voordeel van de twijfel aan mannelijke kandidaten. Echter geldt dit alleen in het geval van negatieve informatie over competentie. Als kandidaten dus minder competent zijn voor een bepaalde rol worden vrouwelijke kandidaten hier harder op afgestraft. Dit laat zien dat er bij een onderdeel waarop de kiezer zijn stem baseert wel degelijk sprake is van dubbele standaarden.

Daarnaast is er ook bewijs gevonden dat er dubbele standaarden bestaan voor mannen en vrouwen voor het toewijzen van een belangrijke ministerspost, wat blijkt uit een

studie van Baumann et al. Zweden heeft op veel gebieden al een gelijke samenleving tussen mannen en vrouwen, waardoor zoveel mogelijk andere variabelen worden uitgesloten. Op basis van het agent-principaal probleem kiest een coalitiepartij wie een bepaalde ministerpost krijgt. Deze theorie is hier van toepassing, omdat de coalitiepartij -- ‘principaal’ -- na de benoeming van een minister -- ‘agent’ -- geen controle heeft over hoeveel de minister van de partijlijn afwijkt. In hoeverre een kamerlid van de partijlijn afwijkt is gebaseerd op beleidsstandpunten van kamerleden op basis van gegeven toezeggingen. Verder is er net zoals in Nederland sprake van een zwakke positie van de minister-president, waardoor de principaal zodoende de leider van de desbetreffende coalitiepartij is. Dit onderzoek bewijst de theorie dat, wanneer je inderdaad van de partijlijn afwijkt, je minder waarschijnlijk wordt aangewezen voor een kabinetspositie --vooral als je een vrouw bent. Oftewel vrouwen worden harder gestraft voor het afwijken van de partijdiscipline. Dit onderzoek kan echter alleen wat zeggen over dubbele standaarden bij het selectieproces van ministers die voorheen kamerleden waren.

Niet alleen is er dus sprake van dubbele standaarden in een onderdeel van de stemkeuze van de kiezer, maar ook bij het selectieproces van ministers. Dus ondanks dat de dubbele standaarden niet altijd even duidelijk naar voren komen, zijn ze er wel degelijk. En er is dus meer onderzoek en verandering nodig om ervoor te zorgen dat er daadwerkelijk geen dubbele standaarden voor mannen en vrouwen zijn in de politiek. Misschien zijn we ooit in de toekomst ver genoeg dat zowel Nederland als de Verenigde Staten een vrouwelijke regeringsleider hebben gehad.



Reproductive Rights Under Siege: The Nexus Of Abortion Bans And Democratic Backsliding

By Maria Iercosan

Recent trends of democratic backsliding across Europe and the Americas have been a relevant topic of discussion among political science scholars. Far-right victories in Austria and Belgium as well as electoral gains in Germany and France are recent results of the 2024 national elections. Instances of democratic erosion have likewise been observed in new democracies such as Hungary, Brazil, and Poland. Additionally, Freedom House shows there is a global trend of democratic decline, for new and old democracies. Alongside this democratic backlash, patriarchal norms are also resurging. The Women, Peace, and Security Index indicates that the implementation of gender equality laws has slowed in recent years. As of January 2025, Donald Trump issued executive orders that revive some anti-abortion policies from his last administration, including restrictions on federal funding for health programs that discuss abortion as an option or provide referrals for the procedure. At the European level, despite progress (almost all EU members allow access to abortion), new and old democracies still maintain a range of procedural and regulatory barriers that impede access to abortion. Many scholars who address such developments suggest that patriarchy and authoritarianism are “mutually enforcing ills” and the aspect of gender equality needs to be central in the study of democratic backsliding.

Is the access to abortion linked to right-wing democratic backsliding? In this article, I attempt to explore the notion of patriarchal authoritarianism.

Patriarchal Authoritarianism

As the name suggests, the phenomenon of patriarchal authoritarianism refers to a combination of policy backlash that targets both gender equality and democracy, threatening to roll back decades of progress on both fronts. Scholars argue it is manifested through the emergence of right-wing movements and parties that possess an anti-gender and anti-feminist agenda, attacking gender equality policy in areas such as women’s sexual and reproductive rights. We see this taking place in Eastern Europe, with the case of Hungary abolishing gender studies

programs to stop ‘foreign’ influences and Poland having a nation-wide ‘Stop Abortion campaign’ as well as the US and Brazil, where the current administration is defunding feminist organizations.

Abortion

Abortion is “one of the thorniest policy problems faced by modern democracies”. It is an issue that provokes political polarization and moral outrage like few others do. The issue of abortion comes in direct dialogue with religious traditionalism, as it directly challenges the notion that a woman’s reason for existence is to have children. Consequently, it questions the fundamentalist religious thinking and traditionalist views on women’s bodily autonomy. In the social sciences, one key conceptual framework for understanding the factors that determine access to abortion divides them into three domains: the health system, sociocultural context, knowledge, and structural environment. The latter is composed of government, civil society, legal environment, anti/pro-natalist, and associated policies. Abortion is shaped by the health system which incorporates formal and informal components that are dependent on the government or not. Knowledge environment and socio-cultural context are also highly relevant, in ways that can be influenced by the regime type. Scholars emphasize that access to abortion is heavily shaped by a country’s political system. As other studies have also found, democracies tend to impose fewer restrictions on abortion, while autocracies are more likely to limit access.

Abortion and Right-wing Populism

The new wave of autocratization has created space for right-wing populism across new democracies, especially Hungary, Brazil, and Poland. This phenomenon is diverse, yet a common trend can be traced: an obsession with gender. Populists use political discourse and subscribe to an ideology that can be aligned with conservative ideas, often stressing the importance of religion and tradition and referring to abortion rights as being contradictory to the cultural standards and values of society.

As they invoke patriarchal ideology into their political discourse, women get shamed for wanting to have an abortion, and women's organizations gain less support. The voices of the state and the church, as well as other conservative actors, become amplified in the discourse surrounding abortion, which turns it into a controversy and no longer a fundamental right. As a result, health institutions that are key to delivering this service get less funding and, in some cases, new regulations that raise the cost or limit the resources needed for the procedure. A particularly strong example of discursive opposition is in Poland where, since the end of 2015, the populist right-wing government has used a strong anti-gender equality rhetoric in which 'gender ideology' features as a major threat to Polish society and Catholic family values. Statements that challenge gender equality are issued on a regular basis by government officials. Similar statements are also issued occasionally by government officials in Croatia, and more recently in Hungary as well.



Policy Dismantling

Similarly, conservative leaders attack women's rights through policy dismantling. In new democracies facing autocratization, access to abortion gets more limited because of policy change. As conservative political actors gain more influence, they dismantle or reframe policies in areas of reproductive rights, including abortion, as that fits with their conservative agenda. Similarly, scholars argue that authoritarian incumbents may not only reframe policy that protects abortion as a fundamental right but also remove instruments that ensure the delivery of the service, such as cutting funding to health institutions and women's organizations, rising costs of the procedure, adding gestational limits and removing resources.

Thus, the autocrat's playbook consists of a wide range of gender backsliding forms, from more subtle ones in new democracies to brutal repressions in fully authoritarian states. In both, authoritarian leaders promote patriarchal and traditionalist views on gender roles, which often support the subjugation of women and greater state control over women's bodies. One common concept used is the 'traditional family', which becomes a euphemism for tying women's value to childbearing and parenting. Female bodies become targets of social control. Moreover, other tactics that contribute to gender backsliding include policy dismantling or reframing, attacks upon women's organizations, and violent political discourse surrounding reproductive rights. The consequence is that access to abortion becomes lawfully restricted or limited by barriers of context, race, or class.

Conclusion

'No feminist activists in the late '60s and early '70s imagined that we would have to wage a battle for women's reproductive rights in the 90s' are the words of Bell Hooks, American feminist writer in one of her most famous works, *Feminism is for everybody*. 'The demise of an organized, radical feminist coupled with a political backlash placed abortion back on the political agenda. The right of females to choose is now called into question.' These words remain powerful and relevant today. Even in 2025, as society continues to advance, women all across the world still face significant political, administrative, and socio-economic barriers to accessing safe abortions. More than ever, there is a need for intersectionality in literature and activism on gender equality and the promotion of democracy. Those who wish to combat the rising tide of authoritarianism must adopt a gender-inclusive approach: a battle lost on one front is a battle lost on both.

The Power of Women: Spotlight on Christine Lagarde

By Hannah Schmitz

Her hair is unmistakable, her style timelessly chic, her influence enormous - Christine Lagarde is without question one of the most influential women in Europe. Born in Paris in 1956, the Frenchwoman has had a career unimaginable to many.

A Stellar Career

Lagarde studied at the Universities of Paris X, Science Po, and the Avignon Art College between 1977 and 1980. During this time, she completed three Master's degrees: Commercial and Labour Law, Economics and Finance, and American Literature. Her wide-ranging professional career is just as impressive. Starting in 1980, Lagarde worked as a lecturer in contract law and later as an attorney. From 1995 onward, she was a member of the Global Executive Committee and Managing Partner at Baker McKenzie.

She continued to climb the career ladder in the years that followed. In 1999, Lagarde became the global chairwoman of Baker McKenzie. Six years later, she turned to politics and became France's Minister of Trade and later Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. She went on to chair the EU Council, ECOFIN, the G20, and the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors until 2011. She was also Managing Director of the IMF until 2019 and has been the first female President of the European Central Bank since November 2019. She has also received various awards and honorary doctorates, such as the Commander of the National Order of Merit of France in 2021.

A Woman With Many Facets

However, her professional success is not the only impressive thing about Christine Lagarde. In her youth, she was a successful synchronised swimmer and even made it onto the national team. Furthermore, she speaks English, Spanish, and French. According to The Brussels Times, Lagarde has even started learning German as part of her new position as head of the ECB.



Empowering Women

Despite her personal success, Madame Lagarde seems to be well aware of the difficulties women have to overcome in a male-dominated world. In an interview with CNN Business, she spoke about the future of women in leadership positions, stating: „There will be other women. And, if anything, it gives us an additional responsibility of demonstrating that, of course, it can be done. And, of course, we can do the job and sometimes we can do it even better than others. But I'm confident that there will be many more women who will do these jobs because there are many junior women who are unbelievably talented and our job, us, the oldies, is to actually help them, nurture them, coach them, show them the way.” During her visits to Myanmar and Peru in 2013 and 2014, Lagarde has also repeatedly drawn attention to the importance of women for the economy and as agents of change for their own countries. Moreover, in 2023, Madame Lagarde gave a speech at the WTO's International Women's Day in Geneva, in which she spoke of the importance of women for the global economy: „As we celebrate International Women's Day, I think of the young women that I see today, and the opportunities that stand before them. And the words of the writer Gertrude Stein come to mind: ‘You are extraordinary within your limits, but your limits are extraordinary.’ Because today is not simply about how we, as women, respond to a changing global economy. It is about how we shape it, too.” Christine Lagarde - businesswoman, politician, visionary. And if you look at her career to date, you know that she will continue to drive Europe forward, both economically and politically.

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May 7th

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