



WORLD AND TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN 2021

Opinions from “Women in Foreign Policy”

About WFP

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

Why?

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

What do we do?

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

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Zeynep Alemdar & Burcu Özdemir-Sarıgil (eds.)

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Foreword

Zeynep Alemdar & Burcu Özdemir-Sarıgil

Women in Foreign Policy continues to raise awareness about the women-peace-security agenda, to report the situation of women and women's rights in different geographies and to highlight the role of women in international politics. This year, the Women in Foreign Policy Almanac is even more meaningful. We asked our writers to focus more on women, peace and security issues, and we wrote most of the articles in collaboration with our students or colleagues.

Unfortunately, while we were collecting and editing these articles, the world is witnessing an all-out war that we thought would never happen again. The Russian invasion of Ukraine will hurt generations to come. 2021, on the one hand, will be remembered with the pictures capturing Afghan people clinging to the wings of planes carrying American soldiers out of Afghanistan while the Taliban forces took over the country again upon complete NATO withdrawal. In our Almanac, Bezen Balamir Coşkun and Fahriye Keskin Karagöl wrote about this withdrawal process and highlighted its severe consequences for women and girls in Afghanistan. Women's peace advocacy and struggle to end wars continued in various parts of the world in 2021. Our Almanac reminds us women's peace activism and how it prevails although women are consistently excluded from negotiation tables.

All this struggle took place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic impoverished us in many aspects, brought to light structural inequalities in all sectors and reinforced existing inequalities. It would have taken 99 years to close the gender gap in education, health, labor force and political participation, but the pandemic extended this process to 136 years (World Economic Forum 2021). Another problem that was exacerbated by the pandemic was gender-based violence. While one out of every three women in the world was exposed to gender-based violence before the pandemic, a sharp increase in violence was observed after January 2020, when the pandemic started to spread rapidly. According to UN data, 243 million women worldwide have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence during last year (UN Women 2020). There is a 25 percent increase in women's calls to law enforcement agencies for emergency help during social distancing measures and curfews.

From Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco to the European Union, from Congo to Tokyo, and Singapore, from Afghanistan to Turkey, the Almanac focuses on the position, rights, and struggles of women. In terms of political participation, gender gap persisted in 2021. As of January 2022, only 24 heads of state or government in the world were women. This means that the proportion of female heads of state and government in the world is only 8 percent, the highest rate ever achieved. According to the women in politics map of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women (IPU and UN Women 2021), the proportion of women ministers in the world is 21 percent, and women are appointed to ministries that are considered 'low policy' areas such as social policies, environment and energy. The world average of female representation in national parliaments is 25 percent.

Yet, some actors finally heard the voices of women and realized that problems cannot be solved without the participation of women, especially during these hard times of Covid-19, economic crisis, and wars. The UN Secretary-General Guterres, referring to the ultimate aims of the Sustainable Development Goals, said "there can be no sustainable development without achieving gender equality" (UN Press 2021). As known, the UN

Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015 with the slogan "no one will be left behind". It aimed to take serious steps towards ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and correcting climate change by 2030. Ensuring gender equality is the fifth goal and it is integrated into all other sustainable development goals. To this end, at the Generation Equality Forum held in Paris in July 2021, a five-year action plan was adopted and an unprecedented \$40 billion fund to support change was created (Generation Equality Forum 2021).

New countries stated that they wanted to implement a feminist foreign policy. After Sweden, Canada, Mexico and France, Spain and Germany declared that they would follow a feminist foreign policy. Cemile Beyza Kumanova wrote about how these two new countries plan to implement a feminist foreign policy. Another positive development in 2021 was that for the first time, the Olympic Committee took steps to ensure gender equality in the Olympic Games. Burcu Özdemir Sarıgil and Sıla Şahin wrote about encouraging improvements in Tokyo Olympics. Singapore declared 2021 as the year of women. Ecenur Güvendik wrote about the situation of women in this city-country, which is usually off our radar in Turkey.

While women in Africa are struggling with endless wars and poverty, Bilge Şahin wrote about women who are struggling to establish peace in Congo and women who are exposed to domestic violence four times more than the world average in South Sudan (GCSP 2022).

Serpil Açıkalin and Büşra Kılıç explained how in North Africa women's activism takes place, reinforced by the European Union's influence.

Gizem Bilgin Aytaç, Ayda Sezgin, and Eylem Öykü Yıldırım wrote about the socio-political and economic crisis in Lebanon, and the difficulties faced by women who came to this country as asylum seekers.

Başak Kale and Müge Dalkıran discussed the operations of Frontex, funded by the European Union, which disregard lives and human rights of refugees in 2021. Ayşegül Gökalt Kutlu evaluated the legal difficulties faced by refugee women and the relevance of Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention to the granting of refugee status.

Büke Boşnak wrote about how Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention damaged women's struggles for ending femicide and achieving gender equality norm in Turkey. Çiğdem Nas elaborated on the EU-Turkey relations through a gender perspective. Ebru Turhan wrote the course of Turkey-Germany relations in 2021, which was also Angela Merkel's last year in politics. Turhan also reflected on the prospects of Germany-Turkey relations in the period of Olaf Scholz.

Focusing on gender and COVID-19 in 2021, Burcu Sarı Karademir and Ahu Özyurt discussed the socio-economic effects of the pandemic specifically for women. Burcu Sarı Karademir referred to the degrowth movement as a planned economic downsizing as a way out for women. Ahu Özyurt, on the other hand, entitled her article as 'purple exile': when hope is lost and women have no option but to go to other countries, to find other jobs, work in other sectors in order to recreate their lives.

Since Women in Foreign Policy chooses hope over despair and look at the bright side, we wish that you would be encouraged with women's resilience and resistance all over the world in 2021. We salute all women around the world who stand together for freedom, peace, justice. We dedicate this Almanac to women in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

As always, we sincerely thank all the authors of the Almanac who chose to create together during their busy schedules, to Gökçe Gezer, who put the Almanac in its visual form, and Ekin Ürgen, who made it available on the website.

Hoping that we write about how women achieved equality and peace for the 2022 Almanac.

Resources

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Developments in Afghanistan in 2021 and Women

*Bezen Balamir Coşkun & Fahriye Keskin Karagöl**

Images of Afghans clinging to planes that took off and wanting to give their children to US soldiers, became the most dramatic scenes of 2021. On August 31, the US Central Forces Commander's "the last manned aircraft remaining in the country took off from Kabul Hamid Karzai International Airport" words ended the US's adventure on the Afghan soil (Milliyet 2021a). During the evacuations of the international personnel in the country, Afghans, fearing the Taliban's violence, flocked to the airport.

With Taliban taking over the rule in Afghanistan, economic and social conditions in the country have significantly deteriorated. The Afghan economy has been on the verge of bankruptcy due to devaluation and rising unemployment. After the withdrawal of US and NATO troops, international aid was cut down and Afghanistan's assets abroad were frozen by Western banks. This led to deepening of the economic crisis and poverty. According to the UN World Food Program data, 22.8 million out of the 38 million people in the country faced food insecurity in 2021 (Aktan 2021). The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Afghanistan reported that the implementation of international sanctions in Afghanistan reinforced the difficult circumstances in the country. As a result, during the Taliban rule the number of Afghans who sell their children and the number of early and forced marriages of girls have increased dramatically (BBC 2021). Along with the humanitarian and economic crises, allegations of ethnic cleansing have also increased. Facing Taliban's Pashtun nationalism, groups such as Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajiks, and Hazaras in the country's north have been forced to immigrate and leave their homes (Oğuz 2021)

Taliban's takeover deteriorated the rights and freedoms of women in Afghanistan. The harsh rules imposed by the Taliban, especially regarding women's education, created fear and despair among women who had been accustomed to the conditions during the Republican regime (Ziyayi 2021). Immediately after the Taliban came to power, girls were prevented from receiving secondary and high school education. In this regard, the acting Deputy Minister of Education of Afghanistan, Abdul Hakim Hemat, said in December that the ban on girls' education will continue until the announcement of new regulations in 2022 (Williams and Hamedani 2021). In addition, female parliamentarians fled from Afghanistan after the Taliban took over. In an interview with the BBC, a female MP said that 60 out of 69 female MPs left the country while the rest were hiding in Afghanistan (Donkin 2021). Emirhan Mottaki, the Taliban administration's acting foreign minister, and his team arrived in Turkey on October 14. During the visit, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu emphasized Turkey's concerns about the issues of Afghan women's participation in working life and education. In addition, the issues of operating Kabul airport and reopening consulates in Afghanistan were discussed (Williams ve Hamedani 2021).

As the latest development of the year, on December 19, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held a meeting of foreign ministers in Pakistan on the crisis in Afghanistan. Speaking at this meeting, Minister Çavuşoğlu stressed that 23 million Afghan citizens are at risk of starvation and that the country is on the verge of an economic collapse (Milliyet 2021b). Furthermore, during this meeting, Minister Çavuşoğlu held a meeting with Emirhan Mottaki and announced that an agreement had been reached between Turkish and Qatari companies on the

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operation of Kabul airport. Lastly, the economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan triggered a mass movement in 2021. The UN announced that by the end of 2021, around half a million refugees are expected from Afghanistan. UNHCR reported that 80 percent of the Afghan internally displaced people and refugees are women and children (Euronews 2021).

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Germany and Spain: Two New Members of the Feminist Foreign Policy

*Cemile Beyza Kumanova**

Due to its promise and potential for ensuring peace, security, human rights, and development, the number of countries adopting a feminist foreign policy is on the rise. In 2014, Sweden took the lead and Foreign Minister Margot Wallström announced the world's first explicitly "feminist" foreign policy. Yet, no state would be brave enough to dip a toe in this water for another three years. In 2017, Canada put forward its Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) with a considerably limited focus. In late 2018, Luxembourg declared it would advance a feminist foreign policy. A year later, in 2019, France declared a feminist foreign policy. France is followed by Mexico at the beginning of 2020 (ICRW 2021). In 2021 two new members joined the club: Spain and Germany.

Spain became the sixth country to adopt a feminist foreign policy in March 2021. According to Spain's guide to FFP (2021), its feminist foreign policy will be led by these five principles: (1) Transformative approach, (2) Committed leadership, (3) Ownership, (4) Inclusive participation, and (5) Fostering alliances, intersectionality and diversity. Spain's declaration of feminist foreign policy is considered promising because according to [OECD's 2020 Gender Equality Report](#), Spain is well positioned in terms of women's political participation. It is one of the countries with the highest proportion of women in ministerial posts, well above the OECD average, and has the fourth-highest presence of women in Parliament. Yet, there are still concerns about whether the country will be able to keep its promises about the issue because women still make up a little less than one-third (28 percent) of all Spanish diplomats. The number of female ambassadors is also low. Besides, it is not enough to increase the representation of women, without establishing transformative forms of leadership that create change-driving female role models (Romero 2021).

After the November 2021 elections, the new German coalition government announced a feminist foreign policy and framed it in line with the Swedish model of the "three R's", which are "women's Rights, backed with Resources and supporting increased female Representation" (Gill-Atkinson and Pradela 2021). Annalena Baerbock is the foreign minister of the new coalition government and she is also Germany's first female foreign minister. Germany's declaration of feminist foreign policy is a major achievement for feminist policy advocates around the world and feminist civil society actors in Germany, since German foreign policy used to be criticized due to its tendency of putting an enormous emphasis on power politics. Yet, there are still concerns about whether the new foreign policy will follow a similar pattern (Deutsche Welle 2021). Therefore, time will show whether and to what extent Germany could be able to translate its rhetoric of feminist foreign policy into action. Indeed, its likelihood depends on a few factors: The political will at the highest level, the developments within German society, and Germany's ability to draw lessons from the strategies that other governments have used to facilitate institutional ownership of feminist foreign policies.

Gender inequality and discrimination are structural and making structural changes requires huge investment in political and human capital as well as resources. Only time will tell whether the newcomers of the feminist foreign policy club would be successful in making the structural changes they intend to. Fingers crossed!

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2021 Tokyo Olympics and Women in Sports

*Sıla Şahin & Burcu Özdemir-Sarıgil**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tokyo 2020 Olympics kicked off a year later, on 23 July 2021. Full of endeavor, resilience and passion, the Olympics united all people around the world and refreshed hopes for future. Tokyo Olympics under the shadow of pandemic also became a powerful platform for challenging discrimination and inequalities against women in sports. It became the most gender-balanced Olympic Games in history with 5,457 women out of 11,420 athletes, hosting 18 mixed-gender events, along with a sporting schedule giving equal visibility for men and women's events during primetime hours. The International Olympics Committee (IOC) changed its rules to allow one male and one female athlete to jointly carry the flag during the Opening Ceremony (International Olympic Committee 2021a: 5).

Tokyo Olympics is an important milestone for achieving gender equality and certainly sends a powerful message to the world about the importance of empowerment of women and girls in sports. However, this was not always the case. Since the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, in which women were not allowed to compete, we have come a long way. An overview of women's inclusion in the Olympics would be helpful to grasp the hard-won achievements. In 1900, four years after the first modern and men-only Olympics in Athens, 22 women athletes could take part at the Olympic Games in Paris. Constituting only 2.2% of all athletes, these first women athletes competed in tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian, and golf. Women's participation has increased steadily since then. For instance, at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam women constituted 10% of athletes. Almost 50 years later, at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal women's participation doubled with 20% of athletes. At the Atlanta Olympics of 1996, women's participation increased to 34%. The London Olympic Games of 2012 was an important milestone, where for the first time women competed in every sport, and women's participation has reached 44%. Finally, at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, we see the parity between men and women athletes (International Olympic Committee 2021a:7). In addition to the field of play, IOC has been promoting the representation of an increasing number of women in such positions as IOC board and commissions members, credited coaches, accredited international and national technical officials, Games team leaders, National Olympic Committee Chef de Missions, National Delegation Flagbearers, etc. (International Olympics Committee 2021b: 2-4).

The Olympic Games have grown to be the largest sporting event in the world for achieving the goal of gender equality and the Tokyo Olympics Games in 2021 were one of the manifestations of the IOC's dedication to promoting this goal. However, there were also criticisms against the IOC because of the gap between the rhetoric of gender equality and the reality of persisting discrimination against women athletes during the Games.

One of the major criticisms was about the uniforms of the athletes. The IOC replaced bikini uniforms with shorts since bikini uniforms were regarded as too revealing. The German gymnastics, as a reaction, preferred to wear full-body unitards to prevent the sexualization of the women's bodies. The second criticism was about the discrimination against women who cannot participate in the games due to no permission for breastfeeding. Childcare became a matter of serious concern during the Olympic Games. The lack of equality at the top positions was another criticism against the Olympics. Though the number of female athletes was equal to the number of

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male athletes, the women's presence at the executive decision-making level still remained under 40% in IOC. The last criticism was on the media coverage. The representation of men had a higher statistical value than the women. Besides, the representation of white women was dominant in media coverage which indicated the structural and intersectional inequalities within the IOC (The Conversation 2021).

Tokyo 2021 Olympics was the first sports event to represent equality in numbers. However, structural gaps and limitations in gender-specific issues persisted. Focusing more on demands, needs, and challenges of women in the upcoming Olympics and eliminating structural inequalities would ensure a more gender-equal atmosphere in sports. The awareness raised at the public and participant level can be regarded as precursor of more gender-equal developments that may occur in the future.

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2021 in Singapore: The Year of Celebrating Singaporean Women

*Ecenur Güvendik**

The Ministry of Social and Family Development of Singapore declared 2021 as “The Year of Celebrating Singaporean Women (SG Women)”. The main aim of this initiative was to appreciate SG Women’s efforts for their country by portraying them as “mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, and colleagues who have shaped homes, schools, workplaces and communities in Singapore” (MSF 2021). This declaration also supported Singaporean men who try to overcome gender stereotypes against women in society.

The Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (SCWO) and several other organizations have engaged in monitoring and dialogues for the empowerment of Singaporean women through an initiative called 'Conversations on Singapore Women's Development'. These dialogues identify three priority areas for the government to address: workplace opportunities, caregiver assistance, and women's protection. The SCWO and other organizations claimed that laws and regulations must be reformed to meet the demands and needs of Singaporean women, rather than simply celebrating their achievements. They also claimed that for the adaptation of new laws and regulations, the ruling party - The people’s Action Party (PAP) - must have a leading role. Since the 1959 general elections, the PAP has dominated Singaporean politics. Since then, the PAP has been the only ruling party to govern the state. Currently, Lee Hsien Loong (elder son of Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister) is the Prime Minister and in his speech at the ‘Closing Session of the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development’, he stated that the government will develop "concrete proposals" in a White Paper in early 2022 to promote more equal and inclusive society for both men and women (PMO 2021).

While the SG Women are optimistic about the improvements that may result from the White Paper in 2022, most acknowledge the challenges Singapore might confront due to Singapore’s multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and religious social structure (Low 2021). In other words, there have been many intersecting issues in Singapore society that reflect the long-prevailing sexist and patriarchal ideology. To give few examples, the “Singapore Girl” figure of Singapore Airlines’ cabin crew is a critical subject to consider in the case of gender and national identity building. The legislative documents on values of Singapore society - like the 1991 White Paper on Shared Values stating the ‘honorable men’ should govern the state – is another example of the ideology of the patriarchal state. This ideology also shapes the family policies of the state (Chew 2004). Obviously, these examples interlinked with the economy – especially work-life – and gender roles in Singapore society. According to the 1999 report of the Association of Women for Action and Research (1999), there are three paradoxes confronting and troubling the career of SG women. The first paradox is that Singaporean culture expects women to be creative, productive, and corporate professionals who also perform conventional gender roles in the home, primarily as wives and mothers. Secondly, Singaporean women are confronted with the "conflict between job and family" that affects their entry into the labor force. Thirdly, despite increased educational levels and achievements, Singapore's female managers remain in the minority when compared to male managers. Twenty years later from this report, similar problems still exist – only 9% of firms have a female Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in Singapore (Isaac 2020).

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In terms of women's rights and status in Singapore society, much progress has been accomplished over the last half-century. From education and access to the labor force to activism and lobbying for women's rights, the lives of women in Singapore are significantly different from those of prior generations of SG women. Women in Singapore have numerous rights and opportunities, but this does not change the reality that they live in a heavily patriarchal culture. The rights gained by women are generally by-products of specific policy aims rather than any commitment to gender equality or feminism. The 2022 White Paper on women should develop concrete proposals and goals for the empowerment of SG women.

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Women's Search For Peace in War-Time Africa

*Bilge Şahin**

Feminist approaches to peace emerged as a result of women's experiences of and struggles with physical and structural violence. In addition to the visible forms of violence, women are exposed to before, during, and after the war, they also face structural violence such as oppression, inequality, and exclusion from the economic, political, and social organizations as a result of gender power relations. For this reason, women's pursuit of peace is more than just a negative understanding of peace without visible violence, it is a positive peace where structural violence is eliminated, and gender equality is ensured (Tickner and True 2018).

In international politics, women's experiences in war were ignored for many years and women have been mainly treated as victims and passive objects. This started to change as a result of feminist activism in the 1980s, and women's experiences were acknowledged in international politics through Resolution 1325 of the United Nations (UN) Security Council in 2000. Women's experiences of violence were thus recognized, and it has now been widely accepted that protection should be provided to women. At the same time, the important role of women in decision-making mechanisms was recognized and women's participation in peace processes was encouraged (UN Security Council 2000).

The necessity and importance of women's participation in peace processes are clear. As women are affected by war in certain ways, they are also affected by the outcomes of it. Hence, women should have an equal say in the conclusion of the war. Peace processes offer an important opportunity to build a more inclusive and egalitarian order and to achieve political, legal, and social gains for women. For this reason, the inclusion of women in these processes is crucial for the formation of a peaceful society. Additionally, women's involvement in peace processes allows imagining social organization beyond militarist, state-centered and masculine policies (Pankhurst 2003). In other words, women's participation in these processes is necessary to build a peace that is as close to a positive peace as possible rather than negative peace.

The African continent has been the scene of many civil wars since the end of the Cold War, and 2021 was a year of continued violence and conflict in many countries on the continent. Especially women are exposed to the impacts of physical and structural violence. For example, the civil war in Ethiopia has exposed women from Tigray to sexual violence crimes, displacement, and difficulties in accessing food (Reliefweb 2021). However, women are not only exposed to violence during conflicts – they actively seek peace to end conflicts as well.

One of the places where women work to build peace in Africa is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Between 1996 and 2003, Congo witnessed two major wars involving neighboring states and many armed groups. Despite the signing of peace agreements between the parties of the war in 2003, conflict in the eastern part of the country has not ended. In the ongoing conflicts, women are exposed to many human rights violations such as murder, forced displacement, and especially sexual violence, which is committed systematically and widely (Şahin 2021). In 2021, women in the eastern provinces came together to discuss which actors were continuing the war and for what reasons. The gathering of women to reveal the common causes of conflict is of great importance in terms of understanding the war and considering its impact on everyday life as experienced by local communities (Radio

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Okapi 2021a). Women also support the community to work in cooperation with the security forces in areas of conflict, a practice established to counter the actions of armed groups (Radio Okapi 2021b).

Another example from 2021 stems from South Sudan. A civil war is currently taking place in South Sudan, which gained its independence in 2011 from Sudan after 60 years of conflict. Women are excluded from peace processes because of gender power relations and are not included in community-based meetings. To deal with this exclusion, non-governmental organizations provide training to women to support them in finding community-based solutions to end the war and build peace through direct participation, and cooperation with community leaders (Search for Common Ground 2021). As a result, South Sudanese women and women's non-governmental organizations are working towards reconciliation between the different sides of the conflict. At the same time, they engage with the broader society to advocate against sexual violence crimes and explain that these acts are acts of violence that should be stopped (Care International 2021).

There have also been developments at the regional level regarding the participation of women in the peace process. In 2021, the African Union prepared a report on implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, as laid down in Resolution 1325. It has been determined that 80 percent of the states on the continent have adopted a national action plan to implement the Agenda at the national level. It was stated that states and regional organizations should work to support women's non-governmental organizations and women's participation in peace processes. It is envisaged that the states will submit a report to the African Union on what they are doing in this regard (All Africa 2021).

While numerous conflicts continue across Africa, women's search for peace continues. Through an effort to understand the problems driving conflict from an everyday perspective and its impacts on social life, various creative ways are being disseminated to achieve reconciliation. Understanding the importance of these efforts and supporting them at the political level is essential for finding long-term and comprehensive solutions to conflicts. As Congolese lawyer and human rights defender Eve Bazaiba puts it, "Africa can get out of conflict with women's participation in the peace process" (Radio Okapi 2021c).

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Humanitarian and Women Focused Policies in EU's Neighborhood Policy: Tunisia, Algeria And Morocco Cases

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Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, which are also included in the EU-Maghreb Delegation, are countries that have geographical, strategic and economic importance for the EU. When the United States reduced its activities in the region, China's interest in the region started to attract attention, making the region a new center of a competitive politics. The region's need for economic development enabled the EU to be active in terms of spreading shared values, and the EU-Magreb relations gained pace during 2021. For the EU, the importance of local economic development for reducing migration is taken into account in policy making.

Taking a closer look at the relations between the EU and Maghreb countries of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria throughout 2021, it is clear that the EU chose to proceed with its traditional foreign policy instruments. The EU supported the civil society especially through funding long-term projects in human rights, democratic governance, the rights and economic empowerment of young people and women, as well as gender equality and media freedom. Health services were also supported in combating against the COVID-19 pandemic. The financial packages created by the EU were also part of the contractual relations and the conditionality principle that the EU maintains with its neighbouring countries.

Publication of the “Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood: A new Agenda for the Mediterranean” document marks a major political development reshaping the EU's relations with the Mediterranean region in 2021 (European Commission 2021). Assessing the relations between the EU and Mediterranean region, the EU High Representative and Vice-President Josep Borrell stated that “25 years after the Barcelona Declaration and 10 years after the Arab Spring, challenges in the Mediterranean – many of which resulting from global trends – remain daunting” (EU Commission Press Release 2021). As can be seen from the statement there has been an increasing emphasis for reframed and strengthened relations between the EU and Mediterranean countries. With this new perspective within the framework of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood, emphasis was also placed on the empowerment of women and youth in particular.¹

The steps to ensure gender equality, though with different scales and partners in each country, were carried out in coordination with the EU in 2021. The EU's support for gender equality primarily focuses on the fight against gender-based violence, the economic empowerment of women and girls, empowering political participation, and the fight against gender stereotypes in society.

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¹According to this new agenda, the main policy areas have been determined as follows: Human development, good governance and the rule of law: Renewing a shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and accountable governance; Resilience, well-being and digital transformation: Supporting resilient, inclusive, sustainable and connected economies that create opportunities for all, especially women and youth; Peace and security: Providing support to countries to address security-related issues and find solutions to on-going conflicts; Migration and mobility: Jointly address the challenges of forced displacement and irregular migration and facilitate safe and legal pathways for migration and mobility; Green transformation, climate resilience, energy and the environment: Leveraging the potential of a low-carbon future, protecting the region's natural resources and achieving green growth. (European Commission 2021)

Following the invitation of Tunisia to cooperate with the Council of Europe in 2020 to address the issue of violence against women and gender equality, the website “Toutes et tous Uni.es” (“All Together Against Violence”) to guide policy-making and present disaggregated data on violence against women and children, was launched in mid-2021, with the participation of the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors and the Tunisia Office of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2021). Algeria’s track record in terms of gender-based violence is poor as well and women’s rights are gradually declining in the country (Albrecht and Werenfels 2021). Despite its rich energy resources, Algeria is perceived as the most fragile country among the three countries with its susceptibility to conflict and security problems. The Hirak protests, which have continued with interruptions since 2019, raised feminist demands combined with political and economic demands.

Alongside all other issues such as gender-based violence and the economic empowerment of women and girls, the strengthening of women's representation in parliament is a particular focus of the European Union's Action Plan. In Morocco, the project “Support to the development of the role of the Parliament in consolidating democracy in Morocco (2020-2023)” for the empowerment of women through political participation was started in partnership between the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Moroccan Parliament, and a joint conference was held in 2021 (European Democracy Hub 2021). At the same time, there is support to increase women's party activities and empower their political communication power. Based on the idea that sustainable political participation and development of competition under equal conditions will be possible through political, social and cultural activities when they all feed each other, fourteen civil society organizations in Morocco have started the "Equality Now" project with the support of the European Union.

Political developments in Algeria in 2021 also proves that the political success of women is not only limited to the period of entry into politics, but also highly correlated with the success that is sustainable throughout their political careers. The issue of women's political success has been a topic of social debate during the last decade, based on the fact that the educational and civil society backgrounds of women who entered the parliament through quota system in 2012 and 2017 elections were quite poor. With the new regulation made in 2021, the old quota system was abolished, and it was decided to introduce another quota system in gender based party lists instead. Yet, the removal of the quota system caused a great decline in the political representation of women in 2021. Therefore, although women won 120 and 145 seats in parliament in 2012 and 2017 respectively, in the 2021 parliamentary elections, which took place after the law amendment, they could be able to win only 34 seats (Marwane 2021). This example demonstrates that while the introduction of a quota system critical, this regulation is not sufficient. It is primary to transform the socio-political culture, women’s empowerment paths and social stereotypes against women through grassroots activities.

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The Socio-economic Crisis in Lebanon And Women: What is Happening on the Lebanese Streets?

*Gizem Bilgin Aytaç, Ayda Sezgin & Eylem Öykü Yıldırım**

The port explosion in Beirut in August 2020 killed more than 200 people and left thousands homeless. Investigations on this explosion, which is seen as a crisis of justice and credibility by many experts and activists and even considered one of the major crimes in Lebanese history, have been progressing at a considerably slower pace. There are also allegations that the parliament is rendered dysfunctional by the sectarian parties, which exert pressure for delaying the investigations and use their parliamentary immunity as a trump card. Despite the resignation of the cabinet headed by Hasan Diab the day after the explosion, a new government could not be formed for 13 months. Michel Aoun commissioned Najib Mikati to form the new cabinet in September 2021. However, the influential parties of Hezbollah, Amal, and Future Party are challenging the new government (Al Jazeera 2021; Abi-Nassif et al. 2020). The prolonged investigation after the explosion and the fact that it has been covered up, show that the newly formed government cannot be able to take much initiative.

In 2021, Lebanon experienced one of the most severe economic crises in its history. The country faced significant energy constraints and high inflation. The problem deepened with the currency crisis, that was also experienced in the region. The current economic crisis and financial collapse can be traced back to the political crisis in the country that started in 2015 and the social movements that emerged against it.

The Lebanese economy, which has been fragile since the 19th century, faces one of its most severe crises since the civil war between 1975 and 1990. In a domino effect, the economic crisis that has deepened considerably over the last two years triggered the crisis in the finance and banking sectors. Banks' move to stop lending due to their inability to provide inflow of foreign currency, depletion of foreign exchange reserves, public debt, corruption, and international economic sanctions imposed due to Hezbollah are indicators that the problems of the country's economy have become chronic. According to World Bank data, Lebanon's GDP fell from \$55 billion in 2018 to around \$20.5 billion in 2021. Real GDP per capita decreased by 37.1%. More than half of Lebanon's population is below the poverty line (The World Bank 2021). Economic contraction, high inflation and low salaries affected the lower and middle-income groups more seriously and deepened the class inequality.

After the port explosion, the World Bank Group, in cooperation with the United Nations and the European Union, started efforts to determine the macro-economic effects of the explosion on the public. The 18-month "Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Framework - 3RF" includes objectives such as a human-centred recovery program, international grant financing to meet short-term needs and structural reforms to make improvements in the socio-economic context (The World Bank 2020)

The economic problems created by the pandemic and the explosion also affect health security. In July 2021, the Lebanese Ministry of Health stopped subsidizing imported drugs. Therefore, the intense restriction on access to drugs continues today. The increase in foreign exchange-related energy and pharmaceutical costs creates frequent power cuts and medication constraints, along with large energy constraints. This process worsens the pandemic conditions particularly in the poor areas of Lebanon.

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The groups who are most at risk experience the most severe effects. Poverty of women and children is observed amongst the refugees most. In Lebanon, which has the highest number of Syrian refugees in the region, a household spends five times the minimum wage, which means very few people have access to basic needs. Poverty affects both Lebanese and Syrians fleeing war and destruction in their home countries (Palestine Children's Relief Fund-PCRf). Since the start of the Syrian Civil War, Lebanon's population increased by a quarter, making Lebanon one of the countries with the highest number of refugees relative to its population. Just as the population growth in the country itself makes it difficult to access health care, the privatization of the health system affects vulnerable groups the most. The factionalism in the country prevents a coordinated response to problems in the health system. By devaluing the national currency, the country's financial crisis has not provided much help to a response that could otherwise be given. Lebanon's health system problems exacerbated by privatization and the growing lack of transparency in the government have given private providers more influence and power in the health system.

Initiatives to improve refugees' access to healthcare are a joint effort between the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health, UNHCR, NGOs, and humanitarian organizations. Although UNHCR has argued that, since when the refugee influx started in 2011, the health services have improved in Lebanon with the rise in numbers of health centres and staff, Syrian refugees still struggle to access health care. 70% of Syrian refugees are below the poverty line and the price of doctor consultations standing around \$4-9 USD is an amount hard to afford for refugees (Hanna-Amodio 2020). The fact that the regions that remain out of reach of the COVID-19 vaccines are mostly poor areas where the migrants live constitutes a serious problem in terms of the migrants' access to the vaccine policies.

In the face of social, economic, and political problems deepening with the current economic crisis, explosion, and pandemic, Lebanon is experiencing the most significant human security deficiency in its history. While gender-based violence increases in this process, the destructive competition of political parties seriously damages equality of representation. After the 2019 street demonstrations and the government reshuffle, the number of female soldiers in the Lebanese army increased following the enactment of the National Action Plan, which carries out the Women, Peace and Security agenda, within the framework of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 for Lebanon (UN Women 2020). Although we consider it one of the positive outcomes of the National Action Plan in terms of representation in the army, the presence of sectarian militias that are stronger than the Lebanese army creates a fragile and pessimistic environment, especially in terms of women's demands for peace. Despite this crisis and insecurity, women in Lebanon are waging an active political resistance. On 8 March 2021 International Women's Day, women marched on the streets of Beirut to oppose poverty, sectarian violence, the crisis of representation and femicide (Lazkani 2021). The most important points that women and youth emphasise are that the causes of the economic crisis are corruption and sectarian competition.

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Securitization of Migration and the Role of Frontex in Human Rights Violations

*Başak Kale & Müge Dalkıran**

Discussions on the securitization of migration within the European Union (EU) is one of the issues that draw attention within the frame of the development of a common migration policy. The methods and the tools of securitization form the focal points of the academic inquiry (Buzan and Ole Wæver 2003; Bigo and Tsoukala 2008, 1-9). On one hand, the EU continues to work on the creation of a common and efficient common migration policy. On the other hand, it has become a target of criticism due to the policies and institutional methods implemented by its institutions which were developed as the most important tools of this policy. One of the most important institutions and tools is the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). 2021 has become a challenging year for Frontex which was established in 2005. Alongside the border security, Frontex which has expanded its authority towards the prevention of irregular migration over years has become one of the most expensive institutions of the EU due to its growing operations and programs (European Court of Auditors 2020). Frontex, as an active institution in multi-level governance in the securitization of the EU's migration policies, aims to play an active role in the securitization processes not only in border security or in the prevention of irregular migration, but also in the operations it carries out (Mandacı and Özerim 2013).

The fact that Frontex is frequently brought to agenda due to its operations in the Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea, the pushback operations in the regions where it provides border security, and the violations of human rights shows the importance of Frontex as an agency and securitization tool in security governance. There are numerous reports criticising Frontex prepared by the NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International together with other international actors including United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, UN Special Rapporteur on Migrants' Rights, and Commissioner for Human Rights (Human Rights Watch 2021; Amnesty International 2021; OHCHR 2021a & 2021b; Commissioner for Human Rights 2021). Despite the fact that there reports have demonstrated the various violations, there was not any trial opened against Frontex until 2020. Nevertheless, it has become even more evident on October 23, 2020, with the emergence of video footage showing refugee boats being pushed back and prevented from disembarking in the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece. In addition to this, the fact that Frontex was among the institutions that were criticized in the report prepared jointly by various press organizations, in particular Der Spiegel and Bellingcat, had a great impact (Bellingcat 2020). Following this incident, while successive investigations were launched against Frontex, debates over the limits of securitization and the dilemma of protecting human rights have shaped the political agenda.

The investigations conducted by various EU institutions and agencies against Frontex throughout 2020 and 2021 carried different characteristics (Dalkıran 2021). While some of these investigations have focused on transparency and accountability including Frontex's internal monitoring mechanism, budget use and effective complaints mechanisms, other investigations launched by EU Ombudsperson and the LIBE Committee in the European Parliament have aimed at the push-back operations and human rights violations in which Frontex was claimed to have responsibility.

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The Frontex Scrutiny Working Group, which LIBE Committee approved its establishment on 1 March 2021 to monitor Frontex's activities within the framework of the EU-Turkey Statement, published its first report on 14 July 2021 (Strik 2021). The report in which various evidences regarding the push-back operations between Turkey and Greece were examined, drew attention to the lack of internal monitoring mechanism for the protection of fundamental rights. Besides, the report highlights that even if there is no sufficient evidence proving the direct involvement of Frontex in push-back operations and human rights violations during the border monitoring operations, Frontex should play more active role in the protection of human rights in the situations where there is high risk for the violations of human rights. The issues such as the lack of an effective internal monitoring mechanism and the insufficiency of a complaint mechanism, as well as the delays in hiring 40 human rights monitors elaborated in the report prepared by the Scrutiny Working Group are also prominent topics in the report European Ombudsman published on 15 June 2021 (European Ombudsman 2021). That is another question of debate whether this delay is caused by political reasons.

The revelation of the fact that Frontex does not carry the sufficient responsibility to protect fundamental rights shows its role in securitization of the migration governance in spite of that agency is created and developed by the EU. The methods and tools of Frontex, which clearly expose the securitization process of migration and its outcomes within the EU, are crucial in terms of reminding both policy makers and researchers working in this field that the EU should internalise human rights in its migration policy.

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Istanbul Convention And Refugee Women in Turkey

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One of the most important discussions that dominated Turkish public opinion in 2021 was Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence). The withdrawal is worth examining because Turkey previously supported the Convention. The draft Convention was accepted during Turkey's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe and opened for signature on May 11th, 2011 at the meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Istanbul. Turkey signed the Convention without any reservations and was the first country to ratify it in its parliament, putting it into force. On March 20th, 2011 however, Turkey announced its withdrawal from the Convention with Presidential decree no.3718. The Convention is not binding for Turkey as of July 1st, 2021.

The reasons and possible outcomes of the withdrawal are discussed widely in the public. However, a widely disregarded issue was the deprivation of refugee women in Turkey of the protection mechanisms provided by the Istanbul Convention. In its Preamble, the Convention points out to women's increased risk of exposure to violence and especially sexual violence during wars and armed conflicts. Article 2 states that the Convention shall apply in times of armed conflict as well as in times of peace. In this aspect, it obliges the party states to protect women from violence in armed conflicts without the need to apply any other mechanisms. Furthermore, it allows for cooperation between non-governmental organizations and women's associations. In this regard, in line with the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the Convention sees women not only as "victims of violence", but as active agents. With the decision to withdraw, however, Turkey lost the direct link between Istanbul Convention and Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

The general framework providing the protection of refugees is the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. Neither of these documents accepts gender-based violence as a valid reason to grant refugee status. In its Article 1, the Geneva Convention describes a refugee as someone seeking asylum "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (...)." This article does not reckon gender-based violence as a reason to seek asylum, and in practice, the fear of persecution on grounds of gender is not accepted as a sound reason to grant refugee status. Because violence against women is usually not taking place in the public sphere and because the perpetrator is usually not a state actor, evaluating women's fear of gender-based persecution depends on the interpretation of the officials assessing the application. The gender-based violence women aspect is usually explained by these officials as "cultural difference" (Freedman 2007: 81- 2), resulting in the rejection of the asylum applications of female and LGBTi+ victims of gender-based violence. The insufficiency of the 1951 Convention forced women who are seeking asylum on grounds of gender-based violence to base their claims within the category of "membership of a particular social group" and prove that they have well-grounded reasons for the fear of persecution. The "membership of a particular social group" approach allows for granting of the refugee status in cases where the refugee definition is insufficient; yet it does not directly recognize gender-based violence as persecution and offers a save-the-day approach (Akis 2018: 385-6).

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Istanbul Convention is quite comprehensive in terms of the determination of asylum applications. It provides a direct solution to this intricate mechanism in the evaluation of asylum claims based on gender-based violence. Its Article 60 necessitates the state parties to recognize gender-based violence against women as a form of persecution and as a form of serious harm giving rise to complementary/subsidiary protection. The same article obliges the parties to interpret the refugee definition of 1951 in a gender-sensitive manner, and if the feared persecution is based on gender grounds, ensures that applicants be granted refugee status. In the event of the dissolution of the marriage or relationship, Article 59 necessitates the state parties to provide residence status for victims of gender-based violence whose residence permit depends on that of the spouse or partner. Article 61, ensures that victims of violence against women shall not be returned under any circumstances to any country where their life would be at risk or there is the risk of being subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment.

Even though the arguments supporting Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention focused on the preservation of family values, traditions and opposing the term 'gender' by employing anti-LGBTi+ rhetoric, withdrawal is also somehow related to the protection provided to refugees in the Convention. With a high density of refugees, Turkey's withdrawal joins Hungary and Poland's frequent declarations opposing ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Given that Hungary and Poland have strict asylum policies, their objection to the Istanbul Convention overlaps with relatively easier asylum procedures provided in the Convention. For example, when the Hungarian Parliament assembled to ratify the Istanbul Convention, it accepted a political declaration rejecting the Convention on grounds that it defines gender as a social construct and that recognizing gender-based violence as a form of persecution in asylum procedures jeopardizes Hungarian culture, laws, traditions, and national values (Kovacs 2020). The declaration was prepared by Fidesz, the political party to which Victor Orban, Hungary's Prime Minister known for his opposition to the term 'gender', belongs. The Hungarian Parliament refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

In conclusion, the Istanbul Convention ensures the protection of refugee women, as well as the citizens, from violence. It makes it easier for victims of gender-based violence to obtain refugee status. Language problems, lack of information about where to apply to in case of being exposed to violence, and the fear of deportation impede refugee women in Turkey to avoid a confrontation with the state power anyway. It is clear that losing the protective umbrella of the Istanbul Convention makes refugee women even more vulnerable.

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Turkey's Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention: Quo Vadis?

*Büke Boşnak**

The Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, was opened for signature in Istanbul on May 11, 2011. Turkey became the first country to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention. In 2012, during the AKP's third term single-party government, Turkey adopted its most comprehensive law so far in combating violence against women (VAW), namely "The Law to Protect Family and Prevent Violence against Women" (Law No. 6284). Embracing the philosophy of the Istanbul Convention, Law No. 6284 comprehensively defined the various forms of VAW and established new mechanisms for preventing VAW, protecting survivors, and prosecuting perpetrators. Furthermore, Law No.6284 created an enabling environment for civil society mobilization and advocacy for combating VAW in Turkey.

While the Istanbul Convention has been praised by the different segments of society and empowered the demands of women's rights organizations, for the past few years attacks on the Istanbul Convention have become more assertive and organized in Turkey. Anti-gender mobilizations and discussions have also created a hostile space and opposition to gender equality and women's and LGBTI rights. Various religious and conservative actors, ultra-nationalist groups, and right-wing populists mobilized against the Istanbul Convention (Şeker 2021).

On March 20, 2021 with a midnight Presidential decree, President Erdoğan announced Turkey's unilateral withdrawal decision from the Istanbul Convention. Two days later, Turkey notified the Council of Europe Secretary-General and initiated the withdrawal process according to Article 80 of the Convention. To justify the withdrawal decision, the Presidency Directorate of Communications (2021) released a written statement and claimed that the Istanbul Convention derailed from its original intentions of promoting women's rights and fighting any violence against women and "was hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalize homosexuality-which is incompatible with Turkey's social and family values".

Since the withdrawal decision, there has been a strong domestic and international reaction and criticism. In the domestic arena, women's rights groups organized protests and launched litigation campaigns. The women's platforms, human rights defenders, individuals, bar associations, and the opposition parties have filed lawsuits before the Council of State, claiming that decision is unconstitutional and bypassing the authority of the Parliament (Duvar English 2021a). In the international arena, critics condemned the unilateral and unexpected Presidential decision. The EU High Representative, Josep Borell, signalled that the decision would put Turkey away from the EU values and "urge Turkey to reverse its decision...join again the EU in defending the rights of women and girls..." (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations 2021). Further, US President Biden commented on the withdrawal decision as "deeply disappointing", and the Council of Europe's Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, said the move is "devastating" (Guardian 2021).

Despite the national and international outcry, the Council of State rejected the appeals. Based on Article 104 of the Constitution (and ignoring Article 90 of the Constitution), the Council ruled that President Erdoğan has the power

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and authority to unilaterally ratify and annul international agreements (Duvar English 2021b). The withdrawal process was completed and took effect on July 1, 2021.

While the domestic Law No. 6284 is still in force and the AKP government assures to pursue a 'zero tolerance to VAW' policy (The Presidency Directorate of Communications 2021), the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention was the latest and indeed the most unsettling backlash from women's rights in Turkey. It was, at the same time, the tipping point of an iceberg, whose roots are in what Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün (2017) called the "religio-conservative gender climate" of Turkey. Detaching itself from women's human rights, this new gender climate has been built on differences between men and women, gender complementarity rather than equality, and a 'sacred' family. Therefore, the challenge ahead is not only implementation gaps as was the case in the previous decades but also rising contestations over the meaning of gender equality, women's social position, empowerment, and rights.

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Turkey-EU Relations from a Gender Equality Perspective: Istanbul Convention, Sofagate Crisis and the Green Deal

Çiğdem Nas*

Turkey and the EU continued their problematic, complex, and paradoxical relations in 2021. Turkey-EU relations turned towards a more moderate phase at the end of 2020 and in 2021 following a tense period due to gas exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus question, Aegean disputes, and differences in points of view regarding delimitation of maritime zones. However, the attempts to initiate a *Positive Agenda in Turkey-EU relations* as proposed by the European Council could not trigger real progress in the relations (European Council 2020). Looking closely at the developments, the Customs Union modernization process- the most important element in the Positive Agenda- could not be started. The expected acceleration in the refugee cooperation issue could not be attained. On the other hand, the high-level dialogue meetings that were suspended by the EU in 2019 were restarted through the initiation of new issue areas such as climate policy and public health.

In 2021, Turkey's EU accession process could not be revitalized either. The European Commission and the European Parliament criticized the situation in Turkey quite harshly, especially in the following areas: backsliding in democracy, illiberal measures concerning human rights and freedoms, backsliding in freedom of expression, freedom of the media, freedom of association, and autonomy of civil society, deterioration in rule of law and independence of the judiciary, unpredictability and arbitrariness in the management of the economy and over-centralization of the governance system (European Commission 2021a). Expecting a revitalization of Turkey's EU accession process would wait for another season unless the general backsliding referred to as "Turkey's movement away from the EU" was reversed. In addition to the backsliding and failure to fulfill the membership criteria by Turkey, changes in the EU's enlargement policy and reluctance towards the accession of new members also affected the inertia in the accession process.

Two events in 2021 require particular attention when it comes to analyzing the EU-Turkey Relations from the perspective of gender equality and women's rights. The first event was Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention which aimed to fight violence against women (Deutschewelle 2021). The second event was commonly referred to as the "sofagate crisis" when President of the European Commission Ms. Ursula von der Leyen was denied a seat next to President Erdoğan and had to sit on a sofa during their visit to Ankara. These two events also shed light on the causes of the regression in Turkey-EU relations. The decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention displayed some similarities with Turkey's lack of implementation of the European Court of Human Rights judgments in such politicized cases as the Kavala and Demirtaş cases and delaying the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement despite signing it in 2016. This intransigence reflected a mix of conservatism, populism, and reactionary stance regarding contemporary European practices and values. Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention was regarded as a concession to parts of Turkish society that see women's emancipation as a threat and in addition also reflected a general attitude that denied LGBTQ+ rights. The sofagate crisis on the other hand was generally presented as a failure to follow protocol rather than disregard for gender equality or women's rights. However, Ms. Von der Leyen speaking to the European Parliament about the event explained it from the point of view of respect for women and gender equality (De La Baume 2021).

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Whatever the real reason, the scene where a woman who happened to be the President of the European Commission standing unsure of where to sit in front of two men, one the President of the European Council and the other President of a candidate country sitting indifferently to this situation will be engraved in memories as a symbol of lack of a fair and egalitarian attitude towards women and gender equality. The ascendance of the Taliban in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of the USA and NATO forces and their total disregard for woman's rights and equality, and President Erdogan's remarks saying that they did not have major differences with the Taliban, unfortunately, added further spice to the serious situation (Kaplan ve Tosun 2021).

As a welcome development of 2021, Turkey ratified the Paris Climate Agreement prior to COP 26 in Glasgow (Akgül 2021). Being a step that improved Turkey's standing in the global climate regime, the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement was also significant from the viewpoint of Turkey-EU relations. The EU's swift implementation of the European Green Deal despite the Covid 19 pandemic and the inclusion of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in the "fit for 55" package which was publicized on July 14, 2021, with a significant effect on close trade partners of the EU such as Turkey created strong pressure on Turkey (European Commission 2021b). Here, in the context of climate policy, we have witnessed the EU's transformative power which was evaluated as on the wane. The CBAM which would bring an additional cost to goods exported to the EU in 5 product categories, led to the acceleration of preparations to establish an emissions trading system in Turkey similar to the EU ETS. While civil society and business organizations in Turkey showed an interest in the issue, the need to upgrade the climate policy to be able to adapt to developments in the world and in Europe rose to the top of the policy agenda.

The European Green Deal, which impacted socio-economic interests and potentially created a clear risk of loss of competitiveness in the absence of adaptation to climate goals, ultimately led to Turkey's ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement and adoption of the 2053 carbon zero targets. However, the EU's criticism could not trigger a similar effect in the case of Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention such as a reversal of this decision or a comprehensive action plan to prevent femicides, the numbers of which are increasing day by day. This situation stems from the regression in Turkey's Europeanization process primarily concerning the value dimension and the ensuing de-Europeanization as well as the transformation of the relations in a transactional direction. Gender equality and women's rights are at the top of the thematic areas where the turning away from European values is experienced to the fullest. Despite the indicators of the movement away from these values, it could be concluded that their effects are still felt at the societal level. Especially the strong support for the Istanbul Convention and the resistance to the withdrawal decision shown by women's organizations and women's groups indicate that the debate is by no means over and Turkey will return to the European democratic cultural area and the Istanbul Convention sooner or later.

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German-Turkish Relations in 2021

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In 2021 the complex and multifaceted relationship between Germany and Turkey stepped out of its long-established, traditional pattern. Throughout the last decade, the bilateral dialogue between Germany and Turkey had resembled a rollercoaster ride driven by stop-and-go cycles. In other words, moments of rapprochement and smooth dialogue between both partners were followed by a period of conflict and estrangement which then evolved into another phase of cooperation and collaboration in view of mutual interests (Turhan 2019). In 2021, the relationship between Germany and Turkey largely followed a linear developmental path based on sectoral, compartmentalized cooperation. While numerous lines of disagreement continued to exist between the two partners (e.g., the situation of human rights and rule of law in Turkey, Ankara's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, Turkey's approach towards the wider neighborhood including Syria, Libya, Cyprus, etc.), both German and Turkish governments have refrained from impairing the overarching macro-political bilateral dialogue because of such differences.

Three central drivers emerged in 2021 which fostered the presence of a relatively stable, de-politicized, and transactional dialogue between Germany and Turkey throughout the year. First, contrary to other key EU member states such as France, Germany continued to play a constructive mediator role in the successive European Council meetings endorsed for the processes of dispute resolution in the Eastern Mediterranean. Within the European Council, then German Chancellor Angela Merkel had largely contributed to the formulation of a rather balanced approach toward Turkey which was welcomed by Ankara as it included the conditional launch of a sector-driven positive political EU-Turkey agenda (see e.g., European Council 2021). In this vein, then German Foreign Affairs Minister Heiko Maas paid a special visit to Ankara in January 2021 with a view to boosting the rapprochement between Greece and Turkey (Auswärtiges Amt 2021).

Second, in 2021 the already present interdependence between Germany and Turkey has been further reinforced by two developments. First, the severe economic turmoil experienced in Turkey bolstered Germany's importance as an economic and trading partner. In 2021 Germany ranked first in Turkey's exports and was one of the top foreign direct investors in the country. At the same time, the takeover of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan and rising concerns over a new wave of refugee flow to Europe reminded the German federal government once again of the significance of the maintenance and further deepening of the 2016 EU-Turkey refugee "deal" which promotes European-Turkish cooperation on border management. It also augmented Turkey's somewhat forgotten role as a regional stabilizer and arbiter amidst Ankara's declaration of its readiness to play a central role in ensuring security at Kabul's international airport (Reuters 2022).

Third, unlike previous elections, September 2021 German federal elections did not engender the politicization of German-Turkish relations in the domestic arena by the political elite and other societal actors. This environment fostered German-Turkish dialogue as well. That German political parties did not instrumentalize the "Turkey card" in their electoral campaigns could be largely attributed to the resurgence of other issues such as public health, social policies, (green) economy, and digitalization considering the global and local effects of the COVID-19

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pandemic. Furthermore, due to uncertainties as regards the result of the elections until the very last minute, German political parties of the center-right and left refrained from the politicization of identity-related topics such as Turkey, foreigners, and immigration with a view to avoiding losing some of their voters to the anti-system parties that typically form their electoral base through the instrumentalization of these issues (Turhan 2021).

Obviously, the most crucial development of 2021 with important implications for German-Turkish relations in 2022 was the German federal elections held on 26 September. The elections culminated in critical shifts in the German political landscape with the formation of a so-called “traffic light” coalition government consisting of Germany’s Social Democrats, Greens, and Free Democrats. The “new” Berlin’s position on its relationship with Ankara has been expressed in a fairly balanced and somewhat ambiguous manner in the coalition agreement with emphasis on both normative and interest-driven considerations (SPD 2021). Nevertheless, we may expect a more cyclical relationship between Germany and Turkey dominated by sharp ups and downs in 2022 in contrast to the relatively stable environment experienced in 2021 because of two possible developments. First, with her emphasis on a “feminist” foreign policy, new German (Green) Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (DW 2021) may favor the reduction of interest-driven realist motives in German/EU-Turkish relations and incline toward a value-based approach vis-à-vis Ankara. Second, the degree of politicization in bilateral relations may increase in view of greater public attention to be paid to the upcoming general elections in Turkey which may create some obstacles to policy coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental level (Turhan 2021).

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Degrowth in The Care Crisis : Women's Care Work, Hope And Colorful Jams

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The year 2021, spent in the shadow of the pandemic, has shown us how much we need care work. Despite the importance of care work in our lives, in this period, the services of care workers were not appreciated and made visible, nor did the workers receive the financial compensation they deserve. As the gendered division of labor has attributed low-paid or unpaid care work to women and the paid labor market to men, social and economic inequalities against women have intensified during the pandemic period. According to The World Inequality Report 2022, while women's share of total incomes from work approached 30% in the 1990s, today this share has remained at 35%; whereas the progress regarding women's share has almost stopped in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Chancel et al. 2021). Although Turkey ranks second in women's employment with around 30% after Israel, which ranks first in the MENA region with a rate of 47% (World Bank 2021), it is the last in ranking among OECD countries (OECD 2021). According to the TURKSTAT data, the labor force participation rate of women is 30.6%, the employment rate is 26% and the unemployment rate is 15% (TURKSTAT 2020). The unemployment rate of young women is 30.6%. Accordingly, nearly 20 million women (about 70% of women) are economically dependent without any income (Bayar 2021).

OECD data shows that the sectors in which women work most were affected during the Covid-19 process and women's employment fell considerably during this period. Similarly, the broad unemployment rates, show that women in Turkey have been deeply affected by the post-pandemic economic crisis. In the post-pandemic period, the female population, who cannot be included in the workforce statistics because they stopped looking for a job as they lost hope of finding one, has increased considerably (Yüksel 2021). DİSK-AR's Gender Inequality in Work-Life Report also draws attention to the serious dimension of inequality between men and women in both income and wages in Turkey (DİSK 2020). Undoubtedly, this difference both feeds on gender inequality and reproduces and further intensifies women's poverty. According to DİSK's Report on the Situation of Female Labor Force in the Period of Covid-19, 1 million 484 thousand women lost their jobs in this period, which further indicates the severity of women's impoverishment.

Looking at the sectoral distribution of women's employment, it is observed that 50% of women work in services, 25% in agriculture, and 15% in industry (Bayar 2021). In parallel with the global picture, it is seen that women mostly work in the care economy, especially in the fields of education, health and social services during the pandemic period. Considering that these sectors are defined by low wages, insecure and informal working conditions, it becomes clear that the quality of employment in the service sector does not solve women's poverty. The conditions that have worsened with the pandemic have caught women in the grip of the care work crisis, devalued their work both at home and in the service sector, and left them between unequal and unfair working conditions and deep poverty. Moreover, the statistics of domestic violence during the pandemic imply that women's unemployment also risked women's lives (UN Women 2021).

The ILO Report, The Covid 19 Response: Getting Gender Equality Right for a Better Future for Women at Work, explains that the post-pandemic economic crisis is essentially a crisis of the care economy that develops around gender inequality (ILO 2020). The Women in Work 2021 Report predicts that the OECD countries will recover

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from the effects of the pandemic and make progress in women's employment until 2030, only if they double the gender equality in employment (Steilow et al. 2021). In the light of the data; governments that want to fix their economies need to tackle women's poverty exacerbated by pandemics and pursue policies designed for a bigger care economy. To elaborate in the context of care work, it stands out main recommendations that; (i) governments evaluate all their policies with the dimension of gender equality, (ii) solve the problems of gender inequality produced by unpaid and domestic care labor-oriented jobs, (iii) ensure women's participation in the workforce, (iv) recognize the value of the care labor economy produced by women, (v) support women entrepreneurs, and (vi) prepare action plans to close the gender wage gap.

In today's world, where global income inequality is deepening, women do not get their fair share from the growth measured by the gross national product (GNP). In times of economic crisis, however, women continue to bear the burden of the welfare state with unpaid care work. In other words, as experienced during the pandemic process, the exploitation of women by the public and domestic patriarchy continues cyclically during periods of economic crisis when social policies collapse, and this time, women are exploited with free care work. The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work states that the total value of the care work given by women exceeds 10.8 trillion dollars annually on a global scale and that this labor turns the national and global economic wheels (KEDV). According to the ILO, 2 billion people produce unpaid care work and two-thirds of these people are women (Addati et al. 2018). ILO emphasizes that the crisis in the care work sector is deepening and warns that if care workers are employed in low-paid, insecure, and even worse, emotional, economic, and sexual exploitation systems, 200 million people in need of care will find themselves in a deeper crisis by 2030. At this point, the ILO draws attention to the care economy and care workers by stating that the recognition of the care work sector and improving its conditions will contribute significantly to "gender equality", "decent work and economic growth" and "reducing inequalities", which are among the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The fact that the care crisis is simultaneous with the climate crisis that arises as a result of the exploited environment, just like women's labor, complicates the issue even more. There are strong indicators showing that we have reached the limits of environmental exploitation and neither the climate crisis nor the care crisis can be resolved with the mainstream growth-oriented economic policies that failed to deliver the promise of prosperity and happiness so far. At this very point, it is necessary to take a closer look at the Degrowth movement, which emerged as a critique of the growth-oriented socioeconomic order. The Degrowth movement underlines that the understanding of "growth at any cost" does not increase people's well-being and happiness, and tells states, societies, and people that another world is possible (Akbulut 2021). The Degrowth movement, a broad coalition of academia and civil society, calls for stopping human exploitation and environmental destruction at all costs and invites for a growth model that does not exploit the environment and human labor. It draws attention to an alternative economic model based on downsizing and redistribution and puts values such as care, solidarity, and autonomy at its center. It encourages people to take action to ensure a good life for all rather than the pursuit of self-interest (Degrowth.info). In summary, Degrowth proposes not to shrink the current economy, but to establish a new and different economy focused on care work.

Degrowth challenges the assumption that the human is self-interested, rational, and always capable "homo economicus". Instead, Degrowth proposes alternative assumptions for a better and sustainable world and life for all. Degrowth argues that we need to act on the assumption that the human is an altruistic, emotional, and relational being who needs care from birth to death. Accordingly, Degrowth underlines that we should avoid overproduction and overconsumption, and invest in areas that form the basis of human welfare and ensure its continuation. By reconstructing the relationship between humans, environment, and care, designing and envisioning the economy with a focus on happiness and welfare places the care work at the very heart of Degrowth's goals. The Feminisms

and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA) also highlights the emancipatory potential between care work and Degrowth and warns us that a non-feminist downsizing would pose risks for women. The Degrowth movement proposes a socio-ecological roadmap in line with the gender equality-oriented care economy approach. In the final analysis, the Degrowth movement gives us a realistic hope that we can achieve a care-oriented social order in which different gender relations and roles are adopted, paid and unpaid working hours are redistributed among individuals, and an egalitarian coexistence is established across cultures and species. I hope that 2022 becomes a year of fixing and investing in the care economy and creating a fairer, altruistic, egalitarian socio-economic order. As in Didem Madak's poem, may 2022 be as joyful as 'arranging colorful jams on the shelves of our hearts'. Greetings to those who believe that another world is possible.

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2022: A Purple Exodus

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We are supposedly entering the year of leaving everything behind. 2020 and 2021 almost did not exist in our life calendars. We probably do not recall the things that happened and did not happen. The losses, the disease, life changes and we seem to be starting all over. But from where? And for a better foreign policy and welfare how should we put women on the forefront of decision making?

Signs like Jacinda Ardern's and Angela Merkel's sound policies were all encouraging for women's movements all around the world. The post-pandemic governments, election victories and cabinets like Chile showed light at the end of the tunnel for the world. Obviously, the new world after COVID-19 would/should be built around the crushing demand of a more equal and just system. But according to Reuters, it all ended up being "one step forward, three steps back".

ILO's latest reports point out that "home-office" working has actually affected women's employment negatively. Going back to the office has become increasingly difficult. Especially for developing countries, women's employment rates will never recover for the next decade. Even though several banks have developed financial instruments like "gender bonds" for women who work from home or try to build up their own small enterprises, the overall impact of such investments on women's employment is limited for the time being.

For Turkey, the picture is even darker as the country enters a financial crisis worst in decades. 1) Well-educated, middle class, white-collar, married women workers are leaving the work force in droves (as Melinda Gates puts it). High school admission fees, babysitter salaries and lack of affordable kindergartens are putting families on the brink of almost breaking up. 2) Well-educated, single and creative women are leaving the country for good, seeing no hope for their social lives. They carry little motivation that their demands will be heard, and there will be career paths for achievement, happiness and political representation.

I call this a massive Purple Exodus. The removal of Istanbul Convention is the big warning sign of how fast we drifted back in an era where women are thriving and demanding their place in the world. The High Court's Prosecutor M. Elmas Ozmucuk's opinion about the illegality of the removal process is a small but important sign of hope that change should come from within.

Yet, complacency and co-optation is rampant. Scholars are warned to remove the wording "gender" from all their papers or they would be turned down. Even the EU representatives in Ankara have accepted this grave breach of policy for the sake of refugee deal. This shy nod is even more dangerous than being prosecuted. Illegal immigration issue has taken the Turkish-EU policies hostage in such a massive way that, even the mentioning of small social or human issues are a no-no in bilateral meetings. The EU, while shying away to bring the women's issue on the table, is openly and arrogantly tying it into funding for Syrian refugee women living in Turkey. Not surprisingly, the EU is totally unaware of the fact that by supporting and funding pro-refugee policies and projects in Turkey, it is indirectly fueling racism, anti-semitism and violence against women.

Even the frozen body of an Afghan refugee women who wrapped her socks to her children's hands so that they could survive the cold weather while crossing the border from Iran to Turkey couldn't shake the European pride. NGO's that are based in the Western Hemisphere are terrified of challenging political Islam and its side effects

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and this in return pours fuel on the conservative chat lines than antagonize feminist movements. Sadly, countries like France which have a solid interest in women's liberation only sugarcoat these policies with labels like "Feminist diplomacy".

And one should also honestly look inside the house as well. While post-Covid policies that prioritize women and children assistance take hold in other parts of the world, Turkey is engulfed in politics mudslinging as if nothing has changed over the past two years.

In the West and more and more in the East (in India for example) fighting for equality, creating a daily agenda, enforcing a sustainable and continuous action started getting results. Yet in Turkey, even women opinion leaders sometimes leave aside the "big prize" and lose energy on the daily TV political talk shows with no result and no prospect of highlighting women's problems. Ironically, they end up being the players of the same musical chairs game to get a seat in the Turkish parliament.

But meanwhile, tragically the rate of girls who drop out of school is on the rise. While agricultural production is slowing, child labor on the fields is dramatically increasing. Women are constantly locked in the daily non-paying jobs or caretakers without proper raise and health insurance. Getting cancer, heart disease or diabetes due to lack of proper health coverage is not unusual. Women doctors and nurses on the other hand, are getting constantly harassed, injured even killed because of government officials' bitter and targeting language.

Turkish diplomacy while dealing with the US and EU, is obsessed with the defense industry, Eastern Mediterranean issues or the rise of anti-Islam sentiment in the West. Nobody dares to bring women's issues, molestation of children in religious schools to the table. Politics matters, but if you lock your agenda to Kavala-Demirtas Court cases, EU ends up having zero credibility among the westward thinking, liberal and democratic young population for whom at least ECHR meant as a last hope of supremacy of law. Brick by brick, stone by stone, Europe and the United States are building a dark prison for the young and bright generation of Turkey.

2022 might be the year when young women scientists, scholars, lawyers and even TV stars will be leaving Turkey for good. This Purple Exodus, ironically reminds us the days when military tutelage forced the young women wearing headscarves out of state universities and to European and US cities. This, in return, will be the beginning of a brighter bolder and stronger women's movement. Yet this will also mean a lost generation and lost years of brainpower.

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