



**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN,
THEIR STRUGGLE AND HOPES
IN ITALY, FRANCE AND SOMALIA**

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Comparative analysis of the status of women, their struggle and hopes in Italy, France, and Somalia

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AFIS: Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia

AMISOM: African Union Mission to Somalia

CIF: Centro italiano femminile

CSM: Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature

DSRCC: Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

FGM/C: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting

GLFF: Grande Loge Féminine de France

GPG: Gender Pay Gap

GREVIO: Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

IDP: Internally Displaced Persons

ILO: International Labour Organization

INGO: International Non-Governmental Organizations

MDF: Mouvement Démocratique Féminin

MLD: Movimento di Liberazione della Donna

MLF: Mouvement pour la Libération des Femmes

NGO: Non-Governmental Organizations

ORTF: Office de radiodiffusion-télévision française

PCI: Italian Communist Party

PDS: Partito Democratico della Sinistra

SIDA: Swedish International Cooperation Agency

SRC: Supreme Revolutionary Council

SWDO: Somali Women's Democratic Organization

UDF: Union pour la démocratie française

UDI: Unione Donne Italiane

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

WFP: World Food Programme

WHO: World Health Organization

*« Les femmes n'ont pas tort du tout
quand elles refusent les reigles de
vie qui sont introduites au monde,
d'autant que ce sont les hommes qui
les ont faictes sans elles. »¹*

Michel de Montaigne

Aims of the Thesis

This thesis falls within the field of research in political sociology and is specifically related to the status of women in three diverse countries: Italy, France, and Somalia. These realities are so different that it seems difficult to compare them. Still, if one takes a closer look at the situations, it is possible to find many aspects in common: first of all, because they have been linked through history.

The idea of such research came into being because of my roots. Born in Italy from a French mother and a Somali father, I have always found myself in the middle of three cultures that I have managed to make mine. Obviously, the Italian and French origins are easy to match because they are very similar. The African part, instead, is certainly further from my daily life. Nevertheless, with time and greater maturity, I feel deeply involved with what is taking place in that far-away land.

When it comes to dealing with the status of women, it is clear, on the one hand, that an evolution has taken place in our Western nations since the 1970s; on the other hand, an African State like Somalia has seen an incredible setback in the last 30 years. The drama of civil war, terrorism, and poverty has pushed Somali women to struggle more than ever, not only for their rights but also for the possibility to find a little peace, a little relief from the hell they are living through on a daily basis.

We will, therefore, consider, in the first chapter, the status of women from a historical point of view, especially in the XVIII century with some of the pioneers of the feminine struggle and the context they were living in, but also the inequality women had to face with the Napoleonic Code and its administrative closure. A second chapter will consider the theme of fundamental rights and the possibility for women to express themselves more thoroughly and universally. In the third chapter, we will analyse the representativeness of women in politics and how they could make a difference if their voices were heard. The fourth chapter will be dedicated to the economic difficulties women have to face, particularly the Gender pay gap and poverty. Finally, the fifth part will deal with the violence women have to endure either in Europe or Africa on the one hand, and the awareness of many men who have learnt what equality means and who fight with women in order to establish it in civil society, on the other hand.

¹ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, III, 1, Folio, Paris; “Women are not in the wrong when they decline to accept the rules laid down for them, since men make these rules without consulting them.” ((Translation made by myself)).

I. Historical point of view

As Simone de Beauvoir used to say, “On ne naît pas femme, on le devient”², that is to say, “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” Society shaped how women behave, giving them a specific role with specific rights, never as complete as masculine rights can be. We can always say that we have definitely reached equality, but are we really sure that it is true?

In many countries, equality is still a far-away dream that can make us understand how the situation was centuries ago. How is it to live in a men’s world when half of the global population is feminine?

We cannot ignore the great queens who ruled their nation, but what about the “normal” women? Educated women who played a significant role in their community and struggled for their rights to be intellectuals even if they were not born men.

We find different examples in Antiquity, even if they are few and far between. In those days, women were considered daughters, wives, mothers, dependent on men at every stage of their lives, not as thinkers, students, and leaders. However, there are many cases of women who distinguished themselves thanks to their knowledge.

Let us think of Theano, who has often been considered the wife of Pythagoras, who lived in the 6th century BC, and who possessed much more than the title of philosopher. She was also a mathematician and a physician. This woman originated from Greece, therefore, defied all the rules of reason since having all these titles at that time was truly astonishing. When Pythagoras died, Theano took over his school, of which she was a student.³ Following this, several other women decided to enter the Pythagorean institution of knowledge, which allowed them to become teachers or scholars.

Not listed in any dictionary of Antiquity, Hypatia is a woman of remarkable talents, as is Theano. Considered a mathematician and a philosopher, Hypatia lived in Alexandria, Egypt, for most of her life. Her date of birth, though, remains somewhat unclear. However, it is estimated that she was born in about 370 AD and taught in the public service all her life, albeit for a short time. She was even head of the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria.⁴ In 415, she was murdered by a group of fanatical Christians.

Myth or reality, another woman has left her mark in her home country: the story of Queen Ebla Awad (Araweelo) of Somalia is not often told in Western society. Like all Somali stories or legends, it is based on oral tradition, as the Somali language has only been written down for the past fifty years.

Queen Araweelo is said to have ruled northern Somalia around 15 AD. She is a heroine for Somali women and a devil for men. Even today, in the region of Somaliland, women place flowers on her grave, while men throw stones at it.

Araweelo’s story is deeply linked to the patriarchal Somali society that considered women as men’s property (which is still true today). She was married at the age of 16. Even then, clans were fighting, and murders were common. Araweelo’s husband was killed, and as she had no children by him according to some versions of the story, while according to others, her two sons were killed, her

² Simone de BEAUVOIR, "Le Deuxième Sexe," Paris, Gallimard, 1949

³ Régine Pietra, *Les Femmes philosophes de l'Antiquité gréco-romaine*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997.

⁴ Pierre HADOT, « HYPATIE (370 env.-415) », *Encyclopædia Universalis*. Available from <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/hypatie/>

family turned their back on her. She tried to return to live with them, but she was no longer helpful as a widow, as she could no longer bring a dowry.

She decided to live in the wilderness with many other women in the same situation as her. They had to provide for themselves by hunting wild animals and escaping from the bands of armed men who roamed the bush. Araweelo was considered a courageous and fearless person, so the women in her group chose her as their leader. Once she became their chief, she protected her community. Many other women who had heard of her story joined her, especially the minority clans, until she managed to build an army.

She was declared queen, and her first promise to the people was to stop the inter-clan fighting that was killing so many people across the country. She tried to do this peacefully, but the clan leaders refused, so she declared war on them. After successfully imprisoning the clan leaders she had captured, she locked them up in a vast prison. Many people wondered why the men could not escape, and it was rumoured that they had been castrated. Araweelo heard this and advised her people to spread the rumour to eliminate any opposition or men who tried to rebel against her. As a result, she saved thousands of Somalis from war, poverty, and oppression and ruled peacefully for many years before being killed around her 40th birthday.

Araweelo symbolises the strength, resilience, and authority that Somali women possess. Her story is still told two thousand years after her death.

These women, who had been ignored for centuries, have regained a place in the pantheon of the first great intellectuals and heroines.

I. 1. Some significant figures of the feminine struggle in the 18th century

The years and eras have come and gone and have given way to a different awareness. Certainly, erudition had to be sought, but along with this capacity, an idea of transformation of society, of the vision of women within a still very masculine world.

Two women distinguished themselves in two different countries, bordering on each other and very similar.

The first is Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola.

a. Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola

Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola, also known as ‘the beautiful Cartesian of Naples’⁵, was an Enlightenment philosopher and translator in the first half of the 18th century. She was born in 1702 in Salerno. Her uncle was the Dominican preacher Tommaso Alfani, founder of the Accademia degli Arcadi, who introduced her to the intellectual circle of Giambattista Vico and his daughter Luisa, with whom Eleonora formed a friendship based on their shared love of poetry.

⁵ Luciana Capo, *La filosofa salernitana Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola, la figura della donna e il dibattito cartesiano del XVIII secolo*, in "Salernum", Anno XXII - nn. 40-41, gennaio-dicembre 2018, pp. 99-108

In Vico's salon, they discussed the *Cartesian Method*, and Barbapiccola contributed to the diffusion of his *Principia* in Italy. The Italian translation of Barbapiccola⁶ was not only high standard (mainly based on the French one without forgetting the original Latin version) but also a manifesto of women's rights to education and instruction⁷. Indeed, in the foreword entitled *'The translator to the reader'*, she presented Descartes, as the creator of a philosophy that celebrated female minds.

"From the translator to the readers, a preface that was a veritable manifesto on the right of women to learn philosophy and sciences, rather than devote themselves to what was considered feminine tasks, such as sewing, dancing, singing, and manners."⁸

She wished to share the translation especially with women, who were better suited to philosophy than men, as Descartes stated in his dedicatory letter to Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia.⁹ Eleonora overturned the preconception that women were unsuited to study in the preface, arguing that their supposed intellectual weakness was due not so much to nature as to lousy education. She also asserted the right of women to find a place in the philosophical debate then dominated by men, and she did so using the same expressions that men used to keep the female audience away from discussions considered to be the exclusive domain of men:

"I would not like you to read the title of this book and realize that it is the work of a woman; you would invite her to go back to embroidery."¹⁰

Like Cristina da Pizzano¹¹ who, three centuries earlier, in the controversy about the *Romance of the Rose*, virulently defended women and valued their many individual qualities, rather than evoking a stereotypical image of women, praised or decried by poets. Giuseppa refuted one by one the misogynistic ideas commonly accepted by many of her contemporaries.

At the end of the century, in France, another woman marked her time and her era.

b. Olympe de Gouges

Olympe de Gouges, born Marie Gouze, was a French woman of letters who became a politician. She was born in 1748 in Montauban into a middle-class family. Married at 17 against her will, she decided to remain a widow after her husband's death, allowing her to publish her writings freely. In 1770, she moved to Paris.

⁶ René DESCARTES, *I principi della filosofia di Renato Des-Cartes tradotti dal francese col confronto del latino in cui l'autore gli scrisse da Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola*, Per Gio. Francesco Mairesse, 1722.

⁷ Miriam FOCACCIA, Barbapiccola Giuseppa Eleonora. Available from <https://web.archive.org/web/20170412061958/http://scienzaa2voci.unibo.it/biografie/69-barbapiccola-giuseppa-eleonora>

⁸ Idem, Translation by myself of the original version: *"Dal]la traduttrice ai lettori, una prefazione che si andava a configurare come un vero e proprio manifesto circa il diritto delle donne di imparare la filosofia e le scienze, anziché dedicarsi a quelli che erano ritenuti i compiti femminili, come il cucito, la danza, il canto e le buone maniere."*

⁹ Louis-Alexandre Foucher de Careil, *Descartes, la Princesse Élisabeth et la reine Christine : d'après des lettres inédites / par A. Foucher de Careil*, Paris, 1879.

¹⁰ Idem, Translation by myself of the original version: *«non vorrei che da prima incontrandovi voi nel titolo di questo libro, e veggendo essere opera di una donna l'aveste alle canocchie, a' Fusi, ed alle Tele mandare»*.

¹¹ Mariateresa FUMAGALLI, Christine de Pizan. Available from <http://www.enciclopediadelledonne.it/biografie/cristina-di-pizan/>

Olympe de Gouges made her name for the first time with the play *L'Esclavage des noirs ou l'heureux naufrage*, presented at the Comédie-Française on 28 December 1789¹². The performance caused a scandal. This stunt earned her death threats from slave owners.

She wrote many other plays and novels and essays in which she developed her political thinking. Again, the revolutionary events gave her the opportunity to assert herself in the debate of ideas.

She denounced the exclusion of women from the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. In 1791, she published her own *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen*¹³, which she addressed directly to Marie-Antoinette. There, she affirmed the equality of civil and political rights for both sexes, insisting that women be given back the natural rights that the force of prejudice had taken away from them. Thus, she wrote, “*Women have the right to mount the scaffold; they must also have the right to mount the speaker’s rostrum.*”¹⁴

Women’s rights were necessary to end male oppression. Olympe de Gouges considered that men had set the only limits to women’s freedom and justice. She, therefore, wanted to make women aware of the deplorable nature of their lot and the disenfranchisement they suffered in society. The revolutionary events were, in her view, the right moment to awaken women’s consciousness. Women once had an empire over men for the author: they compensated for strength and Law with their charms and cunning. They only needed to be beautiful and lovable, but as soon as their charms were gone, they risked poverty and all the difficulties linked with old age. Olympe de Gouges criticized marriage for encouraging married women to cheat while leaving unmarried women in cruel insecurity. She, therefore, proposed a new contract based on the community of property and its equitable transmission in the event of separation or death.

As women’s rights derive from natural equality, Olympe argued that male oppression was totally unjustified, and therefore women had the right to challenge it. Indeed, she pointed out that the observation of nature did not reveal any comparable subjugation of the female by the male - on the contrary, both sexes were confused. They co-operated in harmony with the order of nature. Thus, though superior in beauty and courage, the inequality of men and women appeared as an exception, not as the rule. For the woman of letters, this injustice resulted from the most terrible ignorance, which was all the more astonishing in the Age of Enlightenment. In fact, reason and philosophy were on women’s side, showing that they had everything in common with men, of whom they were the intellectual equals.

Women’s rights should be identical to those of men. Olympe de Gouges considered that forgetting or disregarding women’s rights was seriously detrimental to the general interest. She, therefore, proposed legally establishing women’s freedom at birth and their equality with men, with differences based only on the common good. In this perspective, the nation aimed to unite women and men in order to preserve their rights in equality. This equality had to be particularly political. Olympe de Gouges wrote that:

¹² Stefania CARLI, *Olympe de Gouges, L’Esclavage des nègres, ou l’Heureux Naufrage*, Studi Francesi, 2008, p. 194-195

¹³ Olympe de Gouges, *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, 1791

¹⁴ Olympe de Gouges, *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, Art I, Alinéa X : *Nul ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions fondamentales, la Femme a le droit de monter sur l’échafaud ; elle doit avoir également celui de monter à la Tribune*, Paris, 1791

*“The law must be the expression of the general will; all citizens must contribute personally, or through their representatives, to its formation; it must be the same for all.”*¹⁵

It followed that public officials could not be awarded on the basis of sex - women were equally eligible for it based on their virtue and talent. Women had to enjoy the same freedom of expression as men. Conversely, finally, all female exceptions should disappear: women could not make exceptions to the Law or escape judicial rigour; they had to contribute to public charges in return for the right of ownership.

In 1792, she joined the Girondins, who opposed the beheading of the King and the violence of the Terror. Unfavourable to the trial of Louis XVI, she offered her help in the King’s defence. Some took advantage of her decision to accuse her of inconsistency. On 2 November 1793, she was summoned before a Court after taking a stand against Robespierre and Marat. She was guillotined the next day.

All her life, Olympe de Gouges fought for her political ideas. Today she is recognised as a pioneer of French feminism. The *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen* thus constitutes a radical plea for women’s demands and a proclamation of the universalisation of human rights.

A few years later, though, her memory was to be cancelled for almost half a century. A great upheaval was about to occur.

I. 2. The Napoleonic Code and the administrative minority of married women

For feminists, the notion of majority cannot proceed without a reflection on its gendered dimension. Whether in political, sexual, civil, or economic life, the responsibilities associated with it are, in fact, exercised unequally between men and women. Among the elements that have structured these inequalities, the Napoleonic Code¹⁶ of 1804 is regularly cited with regard to civil rights and is presented in current feminist discourse as a text that reduces married women to minors. What exactly is the case? What does the code tell us about how the question of the majority was regulated at the time? How can we understand the particular situation of married women? Moreover, what can we learn from this for today?

The French Civil Code, which was established under the leadership of Napoleon I in the early years of the 19th century in a post-revolutionary context, aimed to codify and standardise all the rules that governed the ordinary life of the French people at that time. Still in use today for unmodified parts, it contains provisions on the status of persons and properties and relations between private individuals, particularly within the family.

Since it is a civil code, it does not logically include any matters of public Law, citizenship (regulated in the Constitution), or criminal Law. Therefore, an analysis of this text alone does not allow to draw general conclusions about the status of the majority at the time, nor about women’s rights as a whole. Moreover, like any legal text, it does not describe the actual functioning of society

¹⁵ Olympe de Gouges, *Déclaration des droits de la Femme et de la Citoyenne*, Art I, Alinéa VI : *La Loi doit être l’expression de la volonté générale ; toutes les Citoyennes et Citoyens doivent concourir personnellement, ou par leur représentants à sa formation*, Paris 1791

¹⁶ *Code Civil des Français*, Paris, 1804

- arrangements and other flexibilities often occupy all the space they can - but reveals the will of the rulers and how they conceive the organisation of collective life.

The Napoleonic Code brings together, for the major part, pre-existing rules, notably from Roman Law or the 'Coutume de Paris'. Still, it also reflects the new ideas of the time, such as individual freedoms and the affirmation of equality between all French people. Uniformity of rules throughout the country stems from the constitutional desire to recognise the same rights for all, and this is made clear in Book I: Of Persons, Title I: Of the Enjoyment and Privation of Civil Rights, Article 8, which states that

*“Every Frenchman shall enjoy civil rights.”*¹⁷

The code also lays the foundations of the secular state by considering marriage, the founding institution of the social order, as a civil contract that applies equally to all, regardless of religious beliefs, and prior to religious ceremonies.

*The husband owes protection to his wife, the wife obedience to her husband.*¹⁸

The Civil Code was drafted by representatives of the bourgeoisie, exclusively men, who organised the new society according to their social position. Equality was, thus, established between French people, and it must be understood that not every French woman would enjoy all civil rights. The legal incapacity of the married woman was affirmed. She could no longer act alone without the husband's authorisation to accept a donation, have an identity card and a passport, conclude an employment contract, open a bank account, enter into contracts for her own property, stay in a clinic or hospital without being accused of abandonment of domicile, or enrol in a faculty. It was not until the Law amending the texts of the Civil Code relating to the capacity of married women in February 1938¹⁹ that this new law abolished the pre-existing one.

As we have seen, the situation of women was peculiar. Strictly speaking, they were not assimilated to minors, as were prohibited persons. They were indeed fully adults at the age of twenty-one - unlike boys who had to wait until they were twenty-five for a 'part' of their majority - and could be emancipated before that age without the restriction of rights. The chapters on majority and minority leave no room for ambiguity in this regard. However, the age difference in marriage, which had existed for centuries, but had been increased, already indicated that different expectations would be placed on both sexes in this area.

Indeed, an important series of restrictions on exercising their responsibilities as adults was applied to married women and only to them. They were subject to numerous derogations from the rules set out. The high recurrence of attention to them reflected the complexity of their status. Each situation required a particular rule for the married woman, a second for the divorced mother, and a third for the widowed mother.

¹⁷ *Code Civil des Français*, Livre I, *Des personnes*, Titre I : *De la jouissance et de la privation des droits civils*, Chapitre I : *De la jouissance des droits civils*, art.8, « tout Français jouira des droits civils » Paris, 1804

¹⁸ *Code Civil des Français*, Livre I, *Des personnes*, Titre I : *De la jouissance et de la privation des droits civils*, Chapitre VI : *Des droits et des devoirs respectifs des époux*, art.213, « Le mari doit protection à sa femme, la femme obéissance à son mari. » Paris, 1804

¹⁹ Journal officiel de la République française, *Loi portant modifications des textes du code civil relatifs à la capacité de la femme mariée*, n° 42, 19 février 1938, pp. 2058-2059

The husband alone administers the property of the community. He may sell it, alienate and pledge it without the concurrence [agreement] of his wife.²⁰

Divorced and surviving women, in fact, as long as they did not remarry, could exercise all their patrimonial rights on their own patrimony as well as on that of their children. They also recovered rights equivalent to those of men in legal matters. On the other hand, the education of children was the only area where the mother could not act alone in the absence of the father: she had to be assisted by two close paternal relatives or behave under the supervision of the family council, depending on the acts to be carried out. Moreover, women, at that time, could not exercise guardianship over children other than their own.

We are eminently far from Olympe de Gouges' Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Citizen.

II. Fundamental Rights

Fundamental rights, like civil liberties, social, legal, and political rights, are essential pillars of democracy. Nowadays, they enjoy increased protection. However, it was certainly not the case at the crossroads of the 19th and 20th centuries. Then, women were still considered as second-class citizens because a fundamental right was missing: the right to vote and, therefore, to express themselves as they really wanted.

At the end of the 19th century, though, women from New Zealand had the privilege of being able to express themselves through universal suffrage. On 19 September 1893, the female population, including Maori women, were granted the right to vote. Two months later, on 28 November 1893, they voted for the first time in the legislative elections: they put their ballot papers in the ballot box. It was a first; until then, no country had granted the right to vote to the female population.

Long before the European nations or the United States, New Zealand was the forerunner of a list of countries that, in turn, had to face up to the fact that the right to vote for women was the logical thing to do.

In Europe, the Nordic countries were pioneers, the first of which was Finland, which adopted universal suffrage without social, sexual, or racial restrictions and granted women the right to vote. In the 1907 parliamentary elections, Finnish women were the first European women to vote, and 19 were even elected as Members of Parliament. Norway legislated in June 1913, followed by Denmark and Iceland in 1915.

It was not until 1918 that the English Suffragettes obtained the right to vote for women, but this was still reserved for women over 30. It was not until ten years later that gender equality was achieved at the ballot box, and women could vote from 21.

However, the journey has been fraught with difficulties, especially in the two European countries we are dealing with.

²⁰ *Code Civil des Français*, Livre III, Titre II : *Des donations entre vifs*, Chapitre IV : *Des donations entre vifs*, Section II : *Des exceptions à la règle de l'irrévocabilité des donations entre vifs*, art. 1421, Paris, 1804

II. 1. The women's suffrage in France, Italy and Somalia

The vote for women in France and Italy is a recent achievement in our history; it is even more in Somalia. Indeed, French, Italian and Somali women had to be patient and persistent to be fully-fledged citizens.

II. 1. 1. French Women can vote

As the Liberation of World War II approached, the issue of women's suffrage did not appear to be an absolute priority. It was not even mentioned in the programme of the National Council of the Resistance in March 1944. Nevertheless, things accelerated afterwards: on 18 March, Général de Gaulle declared before the Provisional Consultative Assembly: "*the new regime must include representation elected by all the men and women of our country.*"²¹ On 25 March, the Fernand Grenier amendment introducing women's suffrage was adopted by 51 votes to 16 by the same Assembly²².

On 21 April, Article 17 of the ordinance of the French National Liberation Committee on the organisation of public powers in France after the Liberation stipulated that "*women were electors and eligible under the same conditions as men.*"²³, a provision that was confirmed on 5 October by the Provisional Government of the French Republic: French women could vote.

On 29 April 1945, this right was used for the first time in the first round of municipal elections, which were also the first elections since the Liberation. More than twelve million women were thus authorised to vote, and the participation of women was massive, almost comparable to that of men.

In a context marked by the difficulties linked to rationing and the return of prisoners and deportees, while the war was not yet over and other political issues were naturally on everyone's mind, the unprecedented nature of the ballot nevertheless attracted attention. Filmed newsreels and numerous photographs showed French people (anonymous or famous, of all ages and social backgrounds) crowding the polling stations, queuing up in front of the polling booths, or voting.

Widely disseminated, the images immortalising this participation began to anchor this evolution or rather 'revolution in the consciousness' of henceforth female citizens: as of this day, women's right to vote was real, effective, and acquired.

II. 1. 2. The Italian Women's round

One of the most active Italian figures in demanding the vote for women was the pedagogue Maria Montessori. In 1906, she wrote in the columns of "La Vita," an appeal for Italian women to go to the polling stations to vote: "*Women, stand up! Your first duty in this social moment is to ask for the political vote.*"²⁴

²¹ Claudine SERRE, *De Gaulle et le droit de vote des femmes*, PDF. Available from www.charles-de-gaulle.org

²² Ibidem

²³ Ibidem

²⁴ Maria MONTESSORI, *Proclama alle donne italiane*, in "La Vita", 26 febbraio 1906. Original citation: "*Donne, tutte sorgete! Il vostro primo dovere in questo momento sociale è di chiedere il voto politico.*"

However, the women's movement was hit hard in 1922, when Mussolini came to power and fascism took hold in the country. This period was generally anti-feminist: Fascist ideology defined procreation as a woman's primary duty.

Finally, on 30 January 1945, when Europe was still engaged in the Second World War and northern Italy was occupied by the Germans, the issue was discussed at a meeting of the Council of Ministers at the suggestion of Palmiro Togliatti (Communist Party) and Alcide De Gasperi (Christian Democrats).

Not everyone was in favour, such as some members of the Liberal Party, the Action Party, and the Republican Party. However, the question was treated (and voted) as something by now "inevitable," given the times. On 1 February 1945, the Decree n. 23 of the Luogotenenziale²⁵ (Lieutenant General's decree) was issued, giving the right to vote to Italian women over 21 years of age, except for registered prostitutes who carried out "prostitution outside authorised establishments." Women's eligibility to vote - not just the right to vote - was established by a subsequent Decree, number 74 of 10 March 1946²⁶.

The Vatican was also in favour. On 21 October 1945, Pope Pius XII explained: "*Every woman, therefore, without exception, has, you understand, the duty, the strict duty of conscience, not to remain absent, to take action to contain the currents that threaten the home, to combat the doctrines that undermine its foundations, to prepare, organise and carry out its restoration.*"²⁷

Italian women voted for the first time on 2 June 1946, on the occasion of the institutional referendum between the monarchy and the republic. Only a few were called to the polls a few months earlier for the local government elections. For the first time in history, two women were elected mayor: Ada Natali and Ninetta Bartoli.

At that time, many miles away, another country colonised by Italy was facing a rather difficult situation induced by the end of World War II.

II. 1. 3. Colonialism and Post-colonialism in Somalia

It is essential to take a step back to understand the situation in Somalia better.

Somalia was colonised by European powers in the 19th century. At that time, little was known in Europe about what Somalia was to become, and the main reason for this ignorance was indeed the complexity of the local situation.

In contrast to the inland and desert areas, where nomadic communities of pastoral people moved around, the coastal towns presented an intricate overlap of histories and cultures. The life of the southern Somali coastal cities was a history of stratification of different presences and cultures. For centuries, the inhabitants of the port cities had been accustomed to interacting with foreign people, from the Portuguese to the Turks, from the Indians to the Egyptians, and in more recent times, with Europeans. Each of these experiences had left a lasting legacy, but the fragmentation of the large

²⁵ Gazzetta Ufficiale, DECRETO LEGISLATIVO LUOGOTENENZIALE 1 febbraio 1945, n. 23. Available from <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1945/02/20/045U0023/sg>

²⁶ Gazzetta Ufficiale, DECRETO LEGISLATIVO LUOGOTENENZIALE 10 marzo 1946, n. 74. Available from <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo.luogotenenziale:1946-03-10;74>

²⁷ Enrico GREGORI, *30 gennaio 1945 Le donne italiane conquistano il diritto di voto*, Il Messaggero, 30 gennaio 2017

Somali territory was perhaps the most obvious reality that Europeans found on their arrival. In fact, the French had already occupied Djibouti's area and created their "Côte française des Somalis"; the British were also present on the northern Somali coast, facing Yemen, which would become Somaliland, the Protectorate of British Somalia.

The occasion which concretely allowed Italy to come into play in the Somali context was when Germany tried to make contact with the Sultanate of Zanzibar, which formally held control of the southern Somali cities such as Mogadishu, Brava, Merka, and Chisimaio. Britain, wishing to obstruct these German negotiations, also facilitated its Italian ally in this new situation to sign a trade agreement with Zanzibar.

Italy saw an opportunity for settlement in this region:

*The reason was much more straightforward than people think because [the Italians] had found a real nation (even if it was under the rule of the Sultan of Zanzibar), with a people that had been urbanised for centuries. There were indeed no ports, but its harbours functioned, and maritime and mercantile traffic was growing. Customs had existed since the time of the Sultanate of Mascate and then Zanzibar. The fact that they found real masonry buildings and not precarious dwellings [...] favoured the integration of Italian officials in the cities*²⁸.

In 1908, Somalia was officially an Italian Colony.

After the March on Rome in 1922 and the coming to power of the Fascist National Party, the Italian political situation changed dramatically. In Somalia, which lived for many years in a state of what could be described as isolation and inactivity, the fascist Cesare Maria De Vecchi (1884-1959) was sent as governor in 1923. Arriving in Mogadishu, where he was to remain until 1928²⁹, the new governor found only part of Somalia under the effective control of the Italian colonial government. He, therefore, proceeded to implement his plan to disarm the nomadic populations and reconquer the internal Somali territories. The new governor inaugurated a policy of violence, unscrupulousness, and a lack of understanding of the local reality³⁰. The colony was, in fact, divided between a southern and coastal part under the direct control of Italian rule and a more northern part apparently bound to Italian authority but autonomous and still governed by the local sultanates.

Thus, at the end of his mandate, in 1928, the "reconquest" desired and fought for by De Vecchi led to the results hoped for by the new regime. Under the constant fire of violent repression, Somalia could finally be shown as a united colony controlled by Italian military forces.³¹

The 1930s were the last manifestation of Italian colonial expansionism, culminating in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict of 1935-1936. The war, long premeditated and cleverly presented in terms of propaganda, took place at a time when the imperialist drive of the other European powers had been entirely exhausted³². The incident at the Ethiopian-Somali border provoked an exaggerated reaction from Italy. Despite long months of negotiations between the parties, Italy opened hostilities with Ethiopia on 3 October 1935³³.

²⁸ Nuredin HAGI SCIKEI, Banaadiri. *Il risveglio di una millenaria identità-The renewal of a millenary identity*, CLUEB, 2002. ((Translation made by myself)).

²⁹ Angelo PICCIOLI, *La nuova Italia d'Oltremare*, Mondadori, Milano, 1933

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Angelo DEL BOCA, *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza 2008

³² School History. Available from <https://schoolhistory.co.uk/notes/abyssinian-crisis/>

³³ Zinn Education Project. Available from <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/tdih/ethiopia-invaded/>

Despite the reversal of alliances in 1943, Italy found itself sitting at the ‘losers’ table at the end of the Second World War. Militarily defeated on all fronts by the Allied forces, Italy had seen its colonies in the Horn of Africa occupied by British troops as early as 1941³⁴. At the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947, Italy was not granted any right to regain possession of its former colonies. However, a final solution to the question would be left to the newly created United Nations Organisation. The issue of the final settlement of the Italian colonies took place in a climate of considerable diplomatic tension that was part of the emerging Cold War between the United States of America and the Soviet Union.³⁵

The General Assembly of the United Nations entrusted Italy with a special trusteeship over Somalia through the trusteeship system³⁶ to accompany it on the difficult path towards its future independence. The tasks that the international mandate entrusted to Italy were many and all extremely complex: from the formation of an adequate political and administrative class to the preparation of a modern and efficient army, from economic recovery to the construction of transport infrastructure, from health to education.

The Italian Trusteeship of Somalia (AFIS) became operational on 1 April 1950 and ended on 1 July 1960, when the former Italian Somalia and British Somaliland merged to form the new Somali Republic.

Somali people, both men, and women voted for the first time after Somalia gained its independence from colonial powers. It was a tribute to decolonisation for the new and free country. By 1960, though, few projects had materialised. The country was entering its first years of independence with a minimal number of infrastructures and institutions. Few people had been trained to run the administration. The clans, traditional patriarchal divisions inside the society, quickly took over this institutional structure.

II. 2. Some feminist movements and the legalisation of abortion in the three countries observed

In order to overcome the limitations imposed by male-led societies, women had to unite to gain respect. This was not easy, and it remains so today, but the associations created or strengthened between 1970 and 1980 made it possible to impose a female vision, which had not been taken into account until then.

II. 2. 1. 1970s MLF: Mouvement de Libération de la Femme (France)

On 26 August 1970³⁷, the same day 50,000 American feminists paraded down New York City’s Fifth Avenue to demonstrate for what they called the ‘Women Strike for peace and equality’, nine French women aimed at laying a wreath for the wife of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc of

³⁴ United States Institute of Peace. Available from <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/africza.pdf>

³⁵ Jean-Louis MIÈGE, *Espansione europea e decolonizzazione dal 1870 ai nostri giorni*, Milano, Mursia, 1976

³⁶ United Nations, *Draft Trusteeship Agreement for the territory of Somaliland under Italian administration: special report of the Trusteeship Council*, General Assembly. Official Records. Supplement, Lake Success, New York: UN, 1950

³⁷ The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Betty Friedan*. Available from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Womens-Strike-for-Equality>

Triomphe in Paris³⁸. A few minutes later, they were arrested by the police. That particular day, the media reported the birth of the French Women's Liberation Movement, called in French "Mouvement pour la Libération des Femmes" (MLF), a rebellious heir to May 1968.

It was a landmark event that burst into the public sphere with such great energy. The activists felt driven by an incredible force at a time when finally anything was possible. They wanted to show that there were women in France who thought collectively and knew how to unite to obtain their rights.

Since the 1960s, many women had tried to emancipate themselves from their families, husbands but nothing had really occurred. The "normal" image was the one of a woman who always cared for her family, husband, and children, who had very few chances to emerge in her workplace, just good to be a secretary or a teacher in an elementary school. That situation was worldwide, even in countries considered as "advanced" in the field of the rights, such as the United States or the United Kingdom. In that instance, though, so many French women could not bear anymore to be relegated to a kitchen, have no voice in their everyday life, and live in a masculine world. This anger was growing stronger and stronger.

However, it is difficult to attribute a birth record to this very horizontal movement, a galaxy of small groups belonging to different currents, but mainly from the family planning groups, moved by collective energy that became particularly strong from then on until the early 1980s.

The MLF was a radically new type of movement, which invented itself in women's meetings without claiming to represent them and refused to be represented by anyone. No one was to appropriate the collective name. Indeed, the activists spread their ideas in joint publications, such as "Le Torchon brûlé³⁹", where the leaflets were signed "some activists" or "MLF activists" and the articles with first names or pseudonyms. In addition, women organised themselves during general assemblies in the Beaux-Arts amphitheatre in Paris and many other places in the rest of France. The MLF's provocative and media-friendly actions gave it a tremendous boost, with a massive influx of new activists.

Despite their strategic and political differences, the groups gathered around the right to abortion, the liberation of the body, or against marital violence, giving a real impetus to the MLF's revolutionary project.

II. 2. 2. Abortion and the Manifesto of the 343

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir published a scandalous essay, *The Second Sex*⁴⁰, in which the philosopher denounced the condition of women, the injustices, oppression, discrimination, and the harsh condition of those who were victims of clandestine abortion in France. Among the hundreds of thousands of women who underwent it on kitchen tables, with knitting needles that left them bleeding, many died or were left with after-effects and disabilities for the rest of their lives. It was a cruel situation inflicted on French women with the fear engendered by the ban and the risk of being

³⁸ Sixtine LYS, *Un demi-siècle d'histoire féministe : le Mouvement de libération des femmes fête ses 50 ans*, France Bleue, Août 2020.

³⁹ "Le Torchon Brûlé" is the newspaper published by the Women's Liberation Movement (MLF) between May 1971 and June 1973.

⁴⁰ Simone de BEAUVOIR [1949], "Le Deuxième Sexe", Gallimard, Paris, op. cit.

imprisoned. The Law, passed in 1920⁴¹, prohibited contraception and abortion, which was a crime punishable by the Court of Assize. Women could face from three to six years' imprisonment, and advertising for abortion was banned. The 1939 law aggravated this 1920 law⁴², which reinforced the repression. Special police sections were created. Under the Vichy regime, the Law of 15 February 1942 made abortion a crime against state security, subject to special Courts; the perpetrator may be brought before the State Court and punished with the death penalty. Guilty of performing 27 illegal abortions in the Cherbourg region between 1940 and 1942, Marie-Louise Giraud was sentenced to death and guillotined⁴³ in the name of the family and national protection.

From then on, the fear of being denounced by a neighbour, a member of one's own family, encouraged silence, secrecy, and a sense of shame. By denouncing this painful situation for hundreds of thousands of French women, it is true that Simone de Beauvoir's essay had also enabled millions of them in France and throughout the world to free themselves from shame. However, between 1949 and 1971, the word "abortion" was the most taboo term in French society. In families, among friends, the word was not dared to be uttered in the professional world. At best, it was whispered. French women lacked major means of contraception, even if, thanks to the former deputy of the "Compagnon de la Libération" Lucien Neuwirth⁴⁴ and the doctor Marie-André Lagroua Weill-Hallé.⁴⁵ The pill was finally accessible in 1967. However, it remained limited and young women under the age of 21, the age of majority, had to present written authorisation from their father. Finally, most doctors did not mention this contraceptive method. Clandestine abortions were in fact increasingly numerous, and Simone de Beauvoir published estimates of 800,000 clandestine abortions⁴⁶ per year in France, and of 5,000 women who died as a result of complications.

So when in 1970, a journalist from the *Nouvel Observateur*, Nicole Muchnik, had the idea of a Manifesto⁴⁷, Simone de Beauvoir, together with the feminist Anne Zelensky, immediately found the idea excellent. A few women like Gisèle Halimi, an important lawyer and politician, actress Delphine Seyrig, writers Christiane Rochefort and Monique Wittig and some women from the MLF and the family planning president Simone Iff regularly met at De Beauvoir's flat for several months on Sunday afternoons. These preparatory meetings for the drafting of the text remained historical because they represented the roots, the very heart of the feminist movement, the MLF.

The important thing was to get the media to talk about this Manifesto in a world that did not have social networks. It soon became clear to those women that they needed signatures from emblematic personalities. In France in the 1970s, the best known to the public were film actresses and women of letters. Nadine Trintignant, Delphine Seyrig, and the director Agnès Varda opened

⁴¹ 8 mars, *Interdiction de la contraception et de l'avortement*. Available from <http://8mars.info/interdiction-de-contraception-et-avortement>

⁴² The decree-law of 29 July 1939 established a penalty of ten years' imprisonment for the abortionist. The woman who believed herself to be wrongly pregnant was punishable for the intention to abort.

⁴³ Alexandra FOUCHER, *L'Affaire Marie-Louise Giraud*. Available from <http://www.justice.gouv.fr/histoire-et-patrimoine-10050/proces-historiques-10411/laffaire-marie-louise-giraud-33196.html>

⁴⁴ Lucien NEUWIRTH, 1967 : *la légalisation de la pilule*. Available from https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/evenements/1967_legalisation_pilule/

⁴⁵ Dr Marie-Andrée Lagroua Weill-Hallé, founder in 1956 of the association "La Maternité heureuse" (The Happy Motherhood), which later became the French Movement for the Family Planning. (Mouvement français pour le planning familial).

⁴⁶ Jacques DUPÂQUIER, *Combien d'avortements en France avant 1914 ?*, In: *Communications*, 44, 1986. Dénatalité : l'antériorité française, 1800-1914. pp. 87-106;

⁴⁷ Histoire tv, *Manifeste des 343, dans les coulisses d'un scandale*. Available from <https://histoire.fr/actualit%C3%A9s/manifeste-des-343-dans-les-coulisses-d-un-scandale>

their address books and managed to get the most prominent stars like Catherine Deneuve⁴⁸ and Françoise Fabian to sign. It was a particularly courageous act on the part of these young women, whom the predominantly male film directors might not hire again, thus breaking their careers. Simone de Beauvoir revived all the women of the intellectual world she knew, and her sister, the feminist artist-painter Hélène de Beauvoir, also signed.

The drafting of the text as a preamble to the signatures gave rise to numerous discussions. In the end, it was Gisèle Halimi and Simone de Beauvoir who wrote the summary, which reads as follows:

*“One million women have abortions every year in France. They do so in dangerous conditions because of the clandestinity they are condemned, whereas this operation, performed under medical supervision, is very simple. I declare that I am one of them. I declare that I have had an abortion. Just as we demand free access to contraception, we demand free abortion.”*⁴⁹

The preparation of the publication of the Manifesto gave rise to discussions because Jean Daniel⁵⁰, then editor-in-chief of the *Nouvel Observateur*, wanted to publish only the names of known women. The authors of the Manifesto immediately protested. They wanted this Manifesto to symbolically reach all women in French society, from all social backgrounds and all generations. Finally, on 5 April 1971, its publication with the title *“The list of 343 French women who have the courage to sign the Manifesto ‘I had an abortion’”* caused a massive scandal. Some signatories were rejected by their families, others lost their jobs and received threats. Lives were shredded. Many had signed up in a rush, as a matter of course. They trusted Simone de Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi, the two pillars of the MLF, to get them out of prison if they were arrested. And in fact, they were not prosecuted. Finally, within 48 hours, the then taboo word “abortion” was uttered on the airwaves and at family dinners. In the privacy of their bedrooms, grandmothers secretly told their granddaughters that they, like so many other women, had once had to undergo one, two, or three abortions because they did not have the financial means to feed other mouths. Those women had succeeded in forcing French society and the political authorities to face up to this painful reality.

On 20 November 1971, the International Women's March was the first public demonstration led by the MLF. By shaking off the yoke of male domination, the feminists of the 1970s set the record straight but caused an earthquake in gender relations. It was the first major feminist demonstration since 1936.

II. 2. 3. The Veil Law - LAW 75-17 of 17 January 1975, relating to the voluntary interruption of pregnancy

Abortion was not legalised until four years later, under the mandate of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Simone Veil, Minister of Health, took the text through Parliament until its promulgation on 17 January 1975. Many women felt relieved and enthusiastic. However, Simone de Beauvoir

⁴⁸ Choisir la cause des femmes, *50 ans du Manifeste des 343 : le combat continue !* Available from <https://www.choisirlacauseedesfemmes.org/2021/04/05/50-ans-du-manifeste-des-343-le-combat-continue/>

⁴⁹ Original declaration published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 5 April, 1971, Paris: « *Un million de femmes se font avorter chaque année en France. Elles le font dans des conditions dangereuses, en raison de la clandestinité à laquelle elles sont condamnées, alors que cette opération, pratiquée sous contrôle médical, est des plus simples. Je déclare que je suis l'une d'elles. Je déclare avoir avorté. De même que nous réclamons le libre accès aux moyens anticonceptionnels, nous réclamons l'avortement libre.* »

⁵⁰ Ina.fr, *Jean Daniel à propos du Manifeste des 343*. Available from <https://www.ina.fr/video/I14169083>

herself "cooled them down" by telling them that the fight was not over. She declared, "*Everything about abortion is never settled because there are very powerful and very rich conservative movements that fight to make abortion very difficult to obtain*"⁵¹.

The Veil Law thus legalised the voluntary interruption of pregnancy for a provisional period of five years, before being definitively renewed in 1979, in the wake of a large march co-organised by the MLF and bringing together tens of thousands of demonstrators in Paris.

At that time, the divisions within the Parisian movement were increasingly difficult to hide. In order to save the MLF from oblivion, Antoinette Fouque registered the acronym and created an association in October 1979, triggering a violent polemic and the publication of a book, "*Chronique d'une imposture*."

"For the other activists, especially those who had been there from the start, this was an unacceptable appropriation of the name, which described a movement and not an association, the property of a few," historian Bibia Pavard⁵² explains.

The MLF's momentum faded, but several groups - particularly regional ones - continued its actions, in parallel with a phase of "institutionalisation" brought about by the arrival of the Socialist Party in power in 1981, with the election of François Mitterrand, and the creation of a ministry for women's rights. At a certain point, the MLF was no longer of any use, and the women left to continue their fight" elsewhere.

Some important dates have also contributed to the emancipation of women in France. In 1970, a law on joint parental authority established that the father was no longer the sole head of the family. In 1980, a law recognised rape as a crime. Finally, in 1983, the Roudy Law established professional equality between men and women, which was to be reinforced in 2001.

II. 2. 4. Feminist movements in Italy

Italy and France are two neighbouring countries and yet have two profoundly different feminist cultures. Therefore, how can two countries that are so close, have fought the same feminist battles in the same periods, have such different theoretical approaches? Yet, despite their differences, the influences between the two feminisms are obvious: French figures such as Gisèle Halimi or Antoinette Fouque, to name but a few, are at the heart of Italian feminism.

Italian feminism, like other feminisms, focuses on the criticism of the traditional family considered the centre of female oppression, as well as on body and sexuality, essential nodes, it is said, of the subordination of women. From the outset, feminists fought against sexual roles, starting with the rejection of sexuality aimed at reproduction. It led to a series of assumptions, which would become clear over time, such as attention to the use of a non-sexist language, the revelation of the sexual roots of power, the conviction that the real female disadvantage did not concern the world of work and rights because it was indeed a symbolic disadvantage based on an overall negative image of the female gender, induced by prejudice and reactionary cultures.

⁵¹ Simone de Beauvoir, Citations. Available from <http://eveve.lefigaro.fr/citations/simone-de-beauvoir?page=3>

⁵² Bibia Pavard is a French historian, specialised in the history of feminism.

Italian feminist activism has always been characterised by its politicisation, with the first movements not being dissociable from the political parties in power. This Italian peculiarity is not found in France.

Although greatly influenced by experiences outside its borders, Italian feminism remained firmly rooted in the country's specific history.

However, the proximity of the Vatican, both geographically and ideologically, slowed down the struggle for women's emancipation much more than in other countries, as Catholic political forces were still very powerful in the peninsula during the 1960s and 1970s. It should be remembered that the Christian Democracy ruled the country at both national and local levels, and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was not the most open on family issues. PCI positions and public speeches were most conservative regarding the right to divorce, not to mention the right to abortion⁵³. Thus, there was still a prison for female adultery or marriage as reparation for sexual violence in the mid-sixties.

For these specific reasons and for the ineluctable change of times, many activist groups emerged in the 1970s with very different approaches to feminism⁵⁴.

On the one hand, there were the intensely anti-egalitarian, anti-emancipationist groups, whose cultural roots were concentrated on the search for female subjectivity and the relationship between women, based on self-consciousness, on the small group, on psychoanalysis. This feminism was structured on the extreme negation of any connection with laws and institutions. A clear example of this is the Demau group (Demystifying Authoritarianism Group), which opposed the concept of the integration of women in society.

On the other hand, the emancipationist current of the large women's associations dominated in the post-war period, such as the UDI (social-communist) and the CIF (Catholic). They thought they could reconcile identity and emancipation, liberation and rights, and that it was necessary to confront the institutions in order to press for advantages and regulations for all. Within this highly magmatic and articulated area, where there was a widespread conviction that the feminist movement was by nature extremely heterogeneous, and therefore, capable of encompassing very different positions, party-political ancestry was very much felt, essentially Marxist and radical, which not infrequently ended up causing tensions and fractures. Nevertheless, it was precisely among these activists that a convergence of positions would occur during the 1970s, allowing the start of battles of great importance. The demand for women's self-determination was a major unifying factor. They organized massive demonstrations and planned solutions on issues such as counselling, abortion, and the fight against violence against women. Some set up women's health centres and counselling centres for self-examination.

At the heart of the liberal area was the MLD, founded in 1970 and federated with the Radical Party, from which it would move away in the following years. Linked to the Anglo-Saxon culture of rights and the "sexual revolution", as well as an expression of the cultural strand of Simone De Beauvoir's "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", the MLD played a central role in the great feminist battles of the 1970s.

⁵³ Fiammetta BALESTRACCI, *The PCI, divorce and changing values in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s*. PDF, January 2013. Available from <https://www.researchgate.net/>

⁵⁴ Maud Anne BRACKE, *La nuova politica delle donne. Il femminismo in Italia, 1968-1983*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019.

Also strongly critical of emancipatory feminism, which was accused of not going to the root of the real disadvantage of women (not being able to decide on their own bodies and sexuality), the MLD called for a switch from demands for emancipation, focused on the claiming of rights to requests for liberation, which means the possibility of self-determination on choices concerning their working, family, political and especially sexual life.

However, the MLD did not adopt the practice of the small group of self-awareness, but gave ample space to self-help and the fight for free abortion, and was the first in Italy to take up the battle against violence against women and set up centres for abused women, along the lines of the Anglo-Saxon rape centres and the “Foyers pour femmes” in France. The MLD even developed a project on equal opportunities in the world of work with the initiative of 50% of new jobs for women. In 1976, it occupied a large abandoned building in the centre of Rome, in Via del Governo Vecchio, which became the first Women's House, a fundamental model of feminist self-management of spaces⁵⁵.

The fundamental traits of the MLD, that of acting to reconcile emancipation and liberation, that of believing in a right that can be modified "from below" by the entire population, that of committing to both personal and collective liberation, and of reaching agreements with other feminist groups, led to the great battles for rights. The idea was to continue dialogue with institutions, to put pressure on them so that all women could see an improvement in their living conditions. It should not be forgotten that the possibility for women to be economically free and thus to open a bank account dates only from the end of the seventies.

The model of patriarchal domination was extended from the north to the south of the peninsula, and the legislation concerning women was one of the most conservative in Europe. It was not until 1975 that the crime of honour was repealed. The defence of family honour and the patriarchal family, in general, was an axis of the Civil Code during Fascism. This Civil Code dated 1942⁵⁶ and was subsequently amended and defascised, notably in 1975 by a new law governing family law.

With the feminist movement, engagement, activism, and politics became natural demands of women⁵⁷. Together with divorce, already voted in 1970 but definitely approved after the 1974 referendum, feminists claimed for legal abortion.

II. 2. 5. Law 194 on abortion – 22 May 1978

At the beginning of June 1973, the trial of twenty-three-year-old Gigliola Pierobon, accused of having had a clandestine abortion four years earlier when she was a minor, was held in Padua. Many women from all over Italy gathered in front of the Court in support of Pierobon. Her defence lawyers included Bianca Guidetti Serra, a well-known criminal lawyer at the Turin Bar, a partisan and feminist, who, together with the demonstrators, had shouted, "*We have all had abortions!*" Because it was not just Gigliola's abortion trial, it had to be the trial for all abortions, those of the many, too many Italians who went clandestinely to backstreet abortionists or hired doctors or who just did it on their own, in solitude, shame, pain, and fear. An unwanted pregnancy, often dictated by

⁵⁵ HERSTORY, Gruppi e collettivi femministi a Roma e nel Lazio dagli anni '70 ad oggi. Available from <http://www.herstory.it/casa-della-donna>

⁵⁶ Carlo GHISALBERTI, «Tradizione e innovazione nel codice civile nel 1942», *Clio*, rivista trimestrale di studi storici, XXIX, 1993, p. 337-348 ; 337).

⁵⁷ Diego GIACHETTI, *Nessuno ci può giudicare. Gli anni della rivolta al femminile*, Rome, Derive Approdi, 2005

misinformation and a lack of contraception, became a tragedy, especially for those who could not afford an abortion abroad or in a private clinic.

The verdict of the judges was a judicial pardon, by virtue of "*the deep pity that cannot but be directed towards those who are morally unprepared to face problems involving a generous and hard sacrifice*" and "*the resipiscence shown by the conscious acceptance of a second maternity*"⁵⁸.

"*I didn't ask for their forgiveness: I don't feel guilty*", Pierobon declared shortly afterwards to the "Corriere della Sera"⁵⁹.

In Italy in the 1970s, abortion was illegal because the Rocco Code, the fascist penal code drawn up in 1930, was still in force. Abortion was considered a crime "against the integrity and health of the race". Women who decided to interrupt a pregnancy were liable to one to four years⁶⁰ imprisonment, with a reduced sentence only "if the act was committed to save their honour or that of a close relative".

One part of the feminist movement maintained that it was necessary to intervene in voluntary interruption of pregnancy through the Law. In contrast, others believed that the only way to self-determination was to cancel the crime of abortion. The legislature succeeded in displeasing both sides, approving Law 194, "Regulations for the social protection of maternity and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy," on 22 May 1978.⁶¹

Twenty-two articles, concise, clear, a text of the Law that we can all understand by reading it. Its intent was explicit, right from the title: law 194 still is, in the first instance, a law on the protection of motherhood; the regulation of abortion comes only secondarily. Nevertheless, many feminists called it a fraudulent law because it denied the woman's right to choose for herself.

At the same time, the Law triggered the moralistic and apocalyptic anxieties of conservative society and the Catholic world. Contradictions that were and still are, immediately and clearly reflected in practice, and which have led to obstacles: conscientious objection; obligation to investigate the reasons for having an abortion; no measures against doctors who refuse to issue a certificate requesting the termination of pregnancy.

These obstacles were not enough for those who did not want a law to make abortion legal and public. In 1981, there was a vote in the abrogative referendum. The victory of the 'no' votes to repeal the Law was overwhelming.⁶²

II. 2. 6. Somali Women's Democratic Organization (SWDO)

⁵⁸ Una donna al giorno, *Il processo per aborto a Gigliola Pierobon e la 194*. Available from <https://www.unadonnaalgiorno.it/il-processo-per-aborto-a-gigliola-pierobon-e-le-sue-conseguenze/>

⁵⁹ Valeriano MUSIU, *La storia del processo a Gigliola Pierobon*. Available from <https://www.ilpost.it/2021/03/29/gigliola-pierobon-processo/>

⁶⁰ Codice penale italiano (1930), Libro II, Titolo X: Dei delitti contro la integrità e la sanità della stirpe, Art. 547 - Aborto procuratosi dalla donna. (1), *La donna che si procura l'aborto è punita con la reclusione da uno a quattro anni* [c.p. 29; c.p.p. 30, 235]. Articolo abrogato dall'art. 22, L. 22 maggio 1978, n. 194, sulla tutela sociale della maternità e sulla interruzione volontaria della gravidanza.

⁶¹ *Legge 22 maggio 1978 n. 194*.

⁶² *Referendum sull'aborto, 17 maggio 1981*.

The pre-colonial status of women in African society was ignored and subject to the control of the colonial authorities, who exclusively addressed men when they established local political offices. The political, administrative, and economic systems were restructured to favour the exploitation of the continent, which then favoured male domination. Although the patriarchal system was present in most of Somalia, colonialism contributed to reinforcing the differences between the roles of men and women and the further elimination of any title or identity that women already had in society.

It is clear that the decades of democracy that women had experienced in Europe, albeit with a notorious patriarchal weight in institutions and society, had nothing to do with a country that had been exploited first by the Indian and Zanzibar sultans, then colonised by the British and Italians, as a result of armed conflict and corruption. In this context, the women's first objective was peace, independent and peaceful life for their children and protection by the new State. The priorities could not be the same.

Somali women at the time were emerging from a traumatic colonial period, and their life within the clan was not the freest. The Somali model was the one of polygamy.

Indeed, as a country that is over 98% Muslim, men can marry up to four women if they want to, provided, of course, that they maintain them and their children. Even today, the country has one of the highest birth rates, around five to six children per woman, but the mortality rate is just as high. So children are an absolute asset for Somali women, even if raising them, feeding them, and educating them is not easy.

Therefore, no woman was going to demonstrate for abortion, but for divorce, yes.

On 15 October 1969, President Shermarke was assassinated by one of his bodyguards, and seven days later, his Major General Mohamed Siad Barre took power after a military coup.

The imprint that Siad Barre wanted to give the country was the one of scientific socialism. He established his power in an authoritarian and military way. Anyone who was against his ideology or was a political opponent was imprisoned or permanently removed. The clan society saw at the time members of the dictator's family coming to power and settling in ministries or embassies abroad.

Nevertheless, under Siad Barre, most young girls went to school, and women found jobs more easily. Therefore, women's participation in politics and the military increased during the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, as a Marxist, his ideology considered it useful for women to have the same rights as men.

The Family Law of 1975⁶³ gave equal rights to men and women in regards to marriage, divorce, and inheritance of property and restricted polygamy.

The Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) and the Council of Secretaries have passed a Resolution today giving men and women equal rights and an equal share in inheritance. [...]

It indicates that the men and the women who are married to each other are equal and have equal rights. Giving equality of rights to men and women is an implementation of the United Nations' call on all countries to affect a meaningful advancement of women.⁶⁴

⁶³ *The Family Law of 1975*

⁶⁴ Jaalle Siad BARRE, *My Country and my People, Speeches of Jaalle Siad Chairman of the SRS (Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party) 1975*, Published by the Ministry of Information and National Guidance Mogadishu June 1977

With this in mind, the first most emancipated women in Somalia were able to unite in 1971 in groups that were part of the apparatus of the government.

On 8 March 1977, the Somali Women's Democratic Organisation (SWDO) was born, as a women's section of the political office of the Presidency⁶⁵. The Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party wanted the SWDO as a stubborn reminder of the existence of the female gender, an integral part of Somali society and revolution. A committee of women had been set up in each district of the country to organise meetings and demonstrations; women were to be present in the party's orientation centres in the city districts and villages, as well as in the political leadership, where, however, discrimination became almost automatic due to the difference in educational qualifications required to access high positions.

Women began to make themselves known for protecting children and health with the construction of schools, hospitals, small hotels, roads, communication routes to facilitate a dialogue, and communicating from one part of the country to another. Compulsory military service was introduced for men and girls with a high school diploma: women were present in the police, national security, and the popular militia. This female involvement in the military corps is reminiscent of the women's policy implemented by Gaddafi after the coup d'état of September 1969 and the setting up of his revolution. The timing, the political agendas, the policy of women's inclusion in society by making them equal to men through military service give pause for thought. Libya and Somalia had been Italian colonies; both had a low population density and a small number of inhabitants, both wanted to grow to get out of underdevelopment. Both Gaddafi and Siad Barre needed all citizens to vote and work; they needed men and women equally.

Absolute equality, though, did not occur. First, because access to education was mainly a male issue and the clan structure of the Somali society was too patriarchal for accepting that women could rule anything in the country except for children's education and health problems.

III. Women and politics

Women's struggle for political representation has always been fraught with difficulties.

The first obstacle has been men's attitudes towards women. For centuries, women have never had a say and, through indolence or oppression, have been literally relegated to staying at home and looking after the household and the children. As we have already seen, some women spoke out against this male dictatorship, but they were few and far between and often fell victim to their impetuosity. However, as morals changed, the last century allowed many of them to finally break into the male domain, their preserve: politics.

III. 1. First famous women representatives

Let us then take a closer look at the pioneers of this change in mentality according to our three countries.

⁶⁵ Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues, *Somalia: Report on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Genital Cutting (FGC)*. Available from <https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/wi/rls/rep/crfgm/10109.htm>

III. 1. 1. In Italy

Italy underwent true upheavals in the 20th century. After the First World War, the country was in a severe economic crisis. Workers went on strike for higher wages and demonstrated for better working conditions. Women in this context had very little room to express themselves and were literally crushed by their surroundings.

Fascism, which managed to gain a foothold in the nation, excluded women even more. Male strength and courage were exacerbated in a world dominated by a male leader and a system of control over the population, as in all dictatorships. Therefore, it was mainly during World War II that women could stand up for themselves. First, because they had to make up for the departure of their husbands to the front, but also because the whole society had to be involved. Many of them worked or took the lead in the family, others joined the partisans, but everyone had the opportunity to realise that women also had a part to play and, of course, a word to say.

We will see two significant women who definitely impressed their contemporaries, women and men alike.

a. Nilde Iotti

Leonilde Iotti was the first woman to hold the third-highest office in the State as President of the Chamber of Deputies from 1979 until 1992, a record. Indeed, she is still known today for having been an MP without interruption from the first to the thirteenth legislature (1948-1999).

The daughter of Egidio Iotti, a socialist railway worker, and Alberta Vezzani, a housewife, Nilde was born in 1920⁶⁶ and grew up between Reggio Emilia and Cavriago, where she was forced to take refuge during the war. Her father was dismissed from his job because of his commitment to the trade union. After his death, Nilde received a scholarship that enabled her to enrol at Milan's Catholic University. She graduated in Literature in October 1942 and began teaching in a technical institute in Reggio Emilia.⁶⁷

In northern Italy, there was the Resistance, and many partisan bands were fighting against the Nazi-Fascists. Nilde Iotti encountered the communist side, and in 1943 she collaborated with them, became a partisan relay girl, and carried leaflets, food, medicine, and woolen socks on her bicycle. She took an active part in the Liberation struggle through the Women's Defence Groups, and in 1945 the UDI entrusted her with the task of investigating the conditions of the neediest families. It was to be the start of her long political career. On 31 March 1946, she was elected to the Reggio Emilia city council. On 2 June 1946, at the age of 26, she entered Montecitorio along with twenty-one other female deputies, the first women elected to the new Italian Parliament.⁶⁸

The years of work in the Constituent Assembly were for her a great political school, the proof of her passion and also the birth of a great love, the love for the PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti, who

⁶⁶ European Commission, *Nilde Iotti (1920 – 1999)*. Available from https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/default/files/eu-pioneers/eu-pioneers-nilde-iotti_en.pdf

⁶⁷ Lorena MUSSINI, *Nilde Iotti. Dalla Costituente alla Camera dei Deputati: Una vita per la politica, Lezione storico-memoriale, Reggio Emilia 10/VI/2018*

⁶⁸ *Biblioteca del Senato Emeroteca, Le donne della Costituente*

was married to the communist Rita Montagnana⁶⁹ and by whom she had a son. Their relationship brought her many enmities and difficulties because of the rigid communist morals and the distrust of many comrades. On 20 July, her name, together with those of Angela Gotelli, Maria Federici, Teresa Noce, and Lina Merlin,⁷⁰ was chosen by the Commission of the Seventy-Five to draft the Constitutional Charter. Her report on the family is still relevant today. The fifties and sixties were difficult; she felt excluded and marginalized in the party, but Nilde did not resign herself; she continued to work inside and outside Parliament and proposed a pension for housewives that was never approved. At the end of this sad moment in her political life, Nilde Iotti was re-elected as a deputy with important positions in the Central Committee, in the national secretariat of the UDI, and the federal committee of Reggio. With Togliatti's death at Yalta in 1964, Nilde Iotti's life was destined to be completely devoted to her work life. These were the years of the feminist movement, student protests, and social changes. She championed many battles such as the divorce law (1970), the reform of the new family law (1975), which promoted the legal and moral equality of spouses and the equal treatment of legitimate and illegitimate children, and finally the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (1978).

On 20 June 1979, she was elected President of Montecitorio with 433 votes and began her term for thirteen years, re-elected in 1983 and 1987. These were the years of lead, punctuated by violence, fear, and terrorism in which she focused on the pluralistic role of Parliament and defended democratic institutions. Hon. Iotti was a President, attentive to minorities and to guaranteeing maximum representation to all parties; Nilde Iotti was the first communist to receive an exploratory mandate, and she renounced the appointment of Senator for life proposed to her by President Cossiga⁷¹.

A convinced pro-European (she was a Member of the European Parliament from 1969 to 1979), Nilde Iotti was a strong, courageous, and tenacious woman who made choices that sometimes ran counter to her own party. In 1992, she ran for the Quirinal, but the time was perhaps not yet ripe, and on the ninth ballot, the PDS abandoned her candidacy⁷².

On 18 November 1999, in a letter⁷³ addressed to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Luciano Violante, Nilde Iotti left her position as a Member of Parliament for health reasons after fifty-three years in politics. However, her most important lesson is that she has always been herself, that she did not have to choose by giving something up, which is demonstrated throughout her career.

In the 1980s, she was a friend of Christian Democrat Tina Anselmi, who entrusted her with the task of chairing the commission of enquiry⁷⁴ into the P2 Masonic lodge and was committed to institutional reforms and the Chamber's Rules of Procedure reform, opposing the secret ballot and setting a time limit to reduce obstructionism by radicals in the Chamber.

⁶⁹ Eliana DI CARO, *Nilde Iotti, una lezione di grande modernità*. Available from https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/nilde-iotti-lezione-grande-modernita-ADe8gHH?refresh_ce=1

⁷⁰ Laura Serantoni – *Presidente regionale C.I.F. Emilia Romagna, CENTRO ITALIANO FEMMINILE EMILIA ROMAGNA IL GENIO FEMMINILE DELLE "MADRI COSTITUENTI"*

⁷¹ Giorgio Frasca Polara, *Quando Iotti disse no a Cossiga*. Available from <http://www.fondazioneildeiotti.it/pagina.php?id=730>

⁷² *Ibidem*

⁷³ La Repubblica.it, *Un applauso della Camera per l'addio della Iotti*. Available from <https://www.repubblica.it/online/politica/iotti/iotti/iotti.html>

⁷⁴ Anna Vinci, *La P2 nei diari segreti di Tina Anselmi*

Nilde Iotti's political lesson, also in the constant affirmation of the constitutional principle of women's equality in society, at work, and in the professions, retains all its strength and relevance today, and today's event is a fair recognition of a legacy that is the heritage of the entire country.

b. Tina Anselmi

Tina Anselmi devoted her whole life to democracy and the destiny of women: in schools - she graduated in literature and taught in primary schools; in trade unions; in the Women's Movement of the Christian Democrats; in Parliament: she was a Member of Parliament for six terms, she was Minister of Health and Minister of Labour. In addition, she was responsible for the law on equal opportunities⁷⁵.

She was born in Castelfranco Veneto in 1927. At the age of seventeen, she joined the Resistance as a dispatcher in the "Cesare Battisti" autonomous brigade; she was then part of the regional command of the Volunteers of Freedom Corps⁷⁶. She graduated in literature from Milan's Catholic University and taught in primary schools. From 1945 to 1948, she was an executive of the Textile Union and from 1948 to 1955 of the Teachers' Union⁷⁷. From 1958 to 1964, she was in charge of the Christian Democratic Party's national youth section and took part in world youth congresses around the world⁷⁸. At the Munich congress in 1963, she was elected a member of the steering committee of the European Women's Union, of which she later became vice-president. She was elected as a Member of Parliament for the first time on 19 May 1968 and was re-elected to the Venice and Treviso constituency until 1992. She was Deputy Minister for Labour in the fifth Rumor government and the fourth and fifth Moro governments⁷⁹.

In 1976, she was appointed Minister for Labour, the first woman in Italy to become a Minister. Then, in 1978, she was appointed Minister for Health and in 1981 President of the Commission of Inquiry into the P2 Masonic Lodge; it was an essential chapter in the life of the Republic, a responsibility that Anselmi took on fully and forcefully, signing the important report that analysed the serious relations between the Lodge and state apparatuses and elements of organised crime, set up to influence the democratic life of the country by any means.

She was subsequently appointed President of the National Commission for Equal Opportunities. She chaired the Italian Committee for the FAO. She also was a member of the Commission of Inquiry into the work of Italian soldiers in Somalia. In addition, she chaired the National Commission on the consequences of the racial laws for the Italian Jewish community. The Commission completed its work in April 2001. She was honorary vice-president of the National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy.

Besides, she had been taken into consideration several times by politicians and civil society for the office of President of the Republic.

⁷⁵ Biografie, *Tina Anselmi*. Available from <https://biografieonline.it/biografia-tina-anselmi>

⁷⁶ Niccolò DONATI, *Alla Pari: Tina Anselmi e il lavoro delle donne*. Available from <https://fondazionefeltrinelli.it/allapari-tina-anselmi-e-il-lavoro-delle-donne/>

⁷⁷ Alessandra CHIAPPANO, *La testimonianza di Tina Anselmi sulla Resistenza*. Available from <http://www.italia-liberazione.it/novecento/Anselmi.htm>

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ Governo Italiano Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, *Governo Moro IV*. Available from <https://www.governo.it/it/i-governi-dal-1943-ad-oggi/vi-legislatura-25-maggio-1972-1-maggio-1976/governo-moro-iv/3194>

Finally, in 1998 she was appointed Knight of the Grand Cross Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. She died in 2016.

III. 1. 2. In France

The French situation was more positive after the 1920 strikes. Although the First World War had left a country deeply mourned by so many young men who had died at the front or in the many battles on French soil, the economy was recovering and growing faster than in other industrialised countries. Industrial production was increasing.

However, the 1929 crisis in the United States had its aftermath in the 1930s in France. From then onwards, France faced an economic and social crisis. A severe political crisis followed it, this time, that seemed to threaten the very foundations of the Third Republic.

In this situation of demonstrations, rejection of the extreme right that was emerging in 1934, and the social advances of 1936, women also made their voices heard. However, the outbreak of war postponed everything until the end of the conflict.

Two women, in particular, were in the foreground.

a. Simone Veil

Survivor of the Shoah, promoter of the law on voluntary interruption of pregnancy, and a convinced European, Simone Veil passed away on 30 June 2017, at the age of 89. Thus, French political life lost one of its most significant and most illustrious figures.

Simone Veil was born in 1927 in Nice to an assimilated, patriotic, and secular Jewish family. Her father André Jacob, a graduate of the Beaux-Arts in Paris, began a career as an architect after the First World War. He left the capital in 1924 to settle the family he had just founded in Nice. The first years of his career were indeed promising⁸⁰. But the 1929 crisis hit the Jacob family, as it did to many other French families.

After the German offensive in 1940, the defeat of the French army, and the armistice, the status of the Jews was soon promulgated, and André Jacob saw that the right to practice his profession as an architect was being withdrawn. The southern zone, under Italian occupation, was nevertheless a relative refuge for the Jews until the arrival of the Gestapo on 9 September 1943. The Jacob family then had to scatter. On 29 March 1944, Simone Jacob managed to take her high school exams, which had been brought forward by three months for fear of an Allied landing in the South of France. The next day, she was arrested by the Gestapo⁸¹, followed by all the other members of her family, except her sister Denise, who was involved in the Resistance and was later deported to Ravensbrück.

⁸⁰ *Atti della Giornata di Studi in omaggio a Simone Veil, Università di Cagliari, 2008*

⁸¹ Chloé LEPRINCE et Odile DEREUDDRE, *Simone Veil sur la Shoah : "Nous n'avons pas parlé parce qu'on n'a pas voulu nous écouter"*. Available from <https://www.franceculture.fr/histoire/simone-veil-sur-la-shoah-nous-navons-pas-parle-parce-quon-na-pas-voulu-nous-ecouter>

From the Drancy camp, Simone, her mother, and her older sister were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. That same night, an indelible number was tattooed on Simone Jacob's arm, No. 78651 - she will have it engraved on her sword as an academician in 2010⁸².

Her father died a few days later, as did her brother. She was deported with her mother and older sister to Auschwitz and then to Bergen-Belsen, where her mother died.

On her return to France on 23 May 1945, a date Simone would never forget, she learned that she had passed the high school exams taken the day before her arrest. She then decided to enrol in the Faculty of Law, as she had always wanted, and at the same time entered the new Institute of Political Studies. There, she met Antoine Veil, who had just been demobilized. Born into a family that in many ways resembled the one Simone had lost - "non-religious Jews, deeply cultured, in love with France" - she married Antoine Veil in 1946.

In 1956, after having three children, Simone Veil entered the judges' examination, open to women since 1946. Initially a full member of the Prison Administration Department, she spent seven years, from 1957 to 1964, fighting for improvements in the treatment of prisoners. She was then assigned to the Directorate of Civil Affairs, under the supervision of the Minister of Justice Jean Foyer, who launched major civil code reforms in family matters; Simone Veil drafted the bill on adoption. In 1969, she became a technical adviser in the office of the Minister of Justice. The following year, she was appointed Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Magistracy (CSM) by President Pompidou, the first woman to hold this position⁸³.

Following the election of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing as President of the Republic on 19 May 1974, Simone Veil was appointed Minister of Health in Jacques Chirac's government. She was the only woman Minister in this government⁸⁴, her colleagues holding State secretariats: Annie Lesur for Education, Hélène Dorlhac for Justice, and Françoise Giroud for Women's Affairs.

As early as the first Council of Ministers, legalising voluntary interruption of pregnancy (abortion) was raised by President Giscard d'Estaing. Given the problem of clandestine abortion, it was urgent. It was Simone Veil who was responsible for getting the bill passed. An explosive issue. Supported by the women's Movement and backed by the commitment of the Minister of the Interior at the time, Simone Veil faced up to the attacks. It was in the midst of great agitation that, on 26 November 1974, the President of the National Assembly, Edgar Faure, gave her the floor. Following a strike at the ORTF, the programmes had been cancelled, and the debates in the Assembly were broadcast live by the strikers. Her forty-minute speech was to shake up French society and put Simone Veil on the map of history⁸⁵.

Three days of sometimes unheard-of violence followed. The law was finally passed on the night of 29 November by 284 votes to 189, with a slight majority of votes from the right, supplemented by all those from the left⁸⁶. The law was finally promulgated on 17 January 1975 and

⁸² Bernard LE SOLLEU, *Sur l'épée de Simone Veil, son numéro de déportée...* Available from <https://www.ouest-france.fr/politique/simone-veil/sur-lepee-de-simone-veil-son-numero-de-deportee-100326>

⁸³ Le Monde, « *Simone Veil était une féministe, mais aussi une femme de son temps* ». Available from https://www.lemonde.fr/mort-de-simone-veil/article/2017/06/30/simone-veil-est-une-feministe-mais-aussi-une-femme-de-son-temps_5153903_5153643.html

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁵ Marie GUICHOUX, *Simone Veil : plongée dans les archives d'une icône*, L'Obs, 13 mai 2021

⁸⁶ Jean Potin, *Le 29 novembre 1974, l'avortement légalisé au Parlement*. Available from <https://www.la-croix.com/Archives/Ce-Jour-la/Il-y-a-40-ans-l-avortement-legalise-au-Parlement-2014-11-28-1244454>

provided that: “a pregnant woman whose condition places her in a situation of distress may ask a doctor to terminate her pregnancy. This interruption can only be carried out before the end of the tenth week”. The law came into force but only for five years. However, it was definitively adopted in 1979, and in 2001, the time limit for performing an abortion was extended to twelve weeks. Simone Veil remained Minister of Health in the governments of Raymond Barre until 1979.

After these five years spent at the Ministry of Health, Simone Veil’s important European period began. In her view, European integration was the only way to avoid the horrors of the past. She had been deeply convinced of this since her return from the camps. President Giscard d’Estaing asked her to carry the colours of the UDF⁸⁷ in the first elections to the European Parliament by universal suffrage on 10 June 1979⁸⁸. It was her electoral baptism - a victorious one: her list came out on top. Valéry Giscard d’Estaing supported Simone Veil’s candidacy for the presidency of the European Parliament, seeing it as a strong symbol of Franco-German reconciliation and European construction. “*That a former deportee should become the first President of the new European Parliament seemed to him to augur well for the future,*” Simone Veil wrote in her Memoirs.⁸⁹

Elected President of the European Parliament on 17 July 1979, Simone Veil became a citizen of Europe at the highest level, a position she held for thirty months, until January 1982. However, she did not give up on Europe. President of the Liberal Group, she continued her active involvement in European politics, notably as head of the Parliament’s legal service, until 1993⁹⁰.

On 30 March 1993, Édouard Balladur, the new Prime Minister appointed by François Mitterrand, appointed her as Minister of Health and Social Affairs as Minister of State. She also served as Minister for the City. In 1997, she chaired the High Council for Integration, where she worked on equal opportunities issues.⁹¹

From 1998 to 2007, Simone Veil completed her career at the Constitutional Council, where she was appointed by René Monory, President of the Senate, for a nine-year term.⁹²

At the same time, from 2000 to 2007, Simone Veil was President of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah⁹³, created with the public and private funds from the spoliations of Jews who their owners or their heirs did not claim. Part of the budget is devoted to the Memorial Museum, which houses both the Wall of the Deported and the Righteous Wall.

On 18 January 2007, alongside French President Jacques Chirac, Simone Veil unveiled a plaque in the crypt of the Panthéon dedicated to the Righteous Among the Nations, who “*braved the*

⁸⁷ Laure Equy, *Simone Veil : le centre adroit d’une femme politique*. Available from https://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/06/30/simone-veil-le-centre-adroit-d-une-femme-politique_1580829/

⁸⁸ Udo BUX, *LE PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN: CONTEXTE HISTORIQUE*. Available from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/fr/FTU_1.3.1.pdf

⁸⁹ Gouvernement, *Simone Veil est élue présidente du Parlement européen*. Available from <https://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/9288-simone-veil-est-elue-presidente-du-parlement-europeen>

⁹⁰ L’EXPRESS.fr, *Simone Veil immortelle*. Available from https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/simone-veil-immortelle_707104.html

⁹¹ Véronique LAROCHE-SIGNORILE, *Simone Veil, première femme élue présidente du Parlement européen, il y a 40 ans*. Available from <https://www.lefigaro.fr/histoire/archives/simone-veil-premiere-femme-elue-presidente-du-parlement-europeen-il-y-a-40-ans-20190716>

⁹² *Ibidem*.

⁹³ Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, *Hommages à Simone Veil*. Available from <https://www.fondationshoah.org/la-fondation/hommages-simone-veil>

risks involved and embodied the honour of France and its values of justice, tolerance and humanity”⁹⁴.

Elected in 2008 to the Académie Française in the chair no. 13, which was formerly that of Jean Racine, Simone Veil received the approval of the President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, on 18 March 2010⁹⁵. In 2012, François Hollande, the next President, awarded her the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour⁹⁶.

Simone Veil died in 2017 in Paris after a life incredibly rich in fights and recognised by all, in France, in Europe, and throughout the world.

On 1 July 2018, Simone Veil became the fifth woman to be inducted into the Pantheon in a moving ceremony. She is buried there with her husband.

b. Yvette Roudy

Yvette Roudy was born in 1929 in Pessac (Gironde). She is known for being a French politician who supported the feminist cause.

She attended a vocational school, urged on by her father. However, at the age of 17, she started to work and enrolled in evening classes to graduate from high school. In 1963, she translated *The Feminine Mystique*, which had just been published in the United States. This book was a revelation for her and allowed her to put into words what she felt.⁹⁷

In 1962, the non-communist left-wing group, the “Mouvement Démocratique Féminin”⁹⁸ (Women's Democratic Movement) emerged. Yvette Roudy discovered this movement through Colette Audry and she quickly became a member, along with Marie-Thérèse Eyquem.

She created *La Femme du XXe siècle*⁹⁹, a newspaper of the MDF, of which she was editor-in-chief. In 1965, Yvette Roudy was aware that she had to enter politics to join the debate on the cause of women. She supported François Mitterrand.

She was elected Member of the European Parliament in 1979 on the lists of the Socialist Party (PS), then was appointed Minister for Women's Rights (May 1981- 1986) during the first seven-year term of François Mitterrand. Her ministerial advisors included Simone Iff, former vice-president of the French Movement for Family Planning, and Jeannette Laot, who co-chaired the Movement for freedom of abortion and contraception.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Gouvernement, *Hommage de la Nation aux Justes de France par le président Jacques Chirac au Panthéon*. Available from <https://www.gouvernement.fr/partage/8767-archivesgouv-18-janvier-2007-hommage-aux-justes-de-france-par-le-president-chirac-au-pantheon>

⁹⁵ RFI, *18 mars 2010 : Simone Veil fait son entrée à l'Académie française*. Available from <https://savoirs.rfi.fr/fr/comprendre-enrichir/histoire/18-mars-2010-simone-veil-fait-son-entree-a-lacademie-francaise>

⁹⁶ Julien PONTIUS, *François Hollande remet la Légion d'honneur à Simone Veil*. Available from https://www.bfmtv.com/politique/francois-hollande-remet-la-legion-d-honneur-a-simone-veil_AN-201209100051.html

⁹⁷ Eric FEFERBERG, *Yvette Roudy*. Available from <https://www.franceculture.fr/personne-yvette-roudy.html>

⁹⁸ Sylvie CHAPERON, *La radicalisation des mouvements féminins Français de 1960 à 1970*. Available from https://www.persee.fr/doc/xxs_0294-1759_1995_num_48_1_4423

⁹⁹ “La Femme du XXe siècle” was a newspaper that divulged the MDF ideas on feminism.

¹⁰⁰ Pascale LE BROUSTER, *Contribution à l'histoire du Planning familial : le partenariat CFDT-MFPP au cours des années soixante-dix*. Available from <https://journals.openedition.org/genrehistoire/297>

When she joined the government in 1981, she launched a campaign on contraception and then introduced the reimbursement of abortion by the social security system. In addition, in 1981, the Association of Women Journalists was created thanks to her support.

Feminist and signatory of the 343 Manifesto, she is at the origin of two laws that bear her name: the Roudy law on abortion¹⁰¹, the law on the reimbursement of 31 December 1982, and the Roudy law for parity¹⁰², a law on “the equality of men and women working in companies” of 13 July 1983.

But not all her projects were successful: the 1983 anti-sexism law, when she was Minister for Women’s Rights, was a bitter failure in the light of opposition from advertisers and defenders of the “freedom of the press”.

In 1982, Yvette Roudy officially celebrated 8 March with the idea of “commemorating the struggle of women to end the inequalities and discriminations of which they are victims”¹⁰³. This celebration formalised the date as ‘International Women’s Day’, which later became ‘Women’s Day’ in the media.

In 1984, she set up the “Commission on the feminisation of names of professions, grades, and functions”, and chose Benoîte Groult to chair it. On 3 December 1985, she supported the organisation of the first colloquium of the Ligue des droits des femmes¹⁰⁴.

Yvette Roudy has always been committed to parity. The trigger was in 1992, with the declaration made in Athens during the first European summit, “because women represent more than half of the population, democracy requires parity in the representation and administration of nations”¹⁰⁵. She then created the ‘Women's Assembly’ (1992-1993), whose objective was to include parity in the Constitution and institutions. The same year, she published her book *Mais de quoi ont-ils peur?* And signed the *Manifesto of the 577* for parity.

In 1996, she decided to bring together several women, former Ministers, to mount a joint action. It resulted in the *Manifesto of the Ten*, published in the magazine “L'Express”. She proposed the non-accumulation of mandates, the introduction of proportional representation, and even quotas if necessary.

Yvette Roudy was elected Member of Parliament for Calvados (1986-1993, then 1997-2002) and Mayor of Lisieux from 1989 to 2001. She is a member of the PS national bureau and leads the “Rénover maintenant” current, with Arnaud Montebourg, after having been an NPS member. She supported Ségolène Royal's candidacy for the PS nomination and was part of her campaign team for the presidential election of May 2007. However, she declared herself in favour of the candidacy of François Hollande in 2011.

¹⁰¹ Loi n°82-1172 du 31 décembre 1982 Available from <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000704429/>

¹⁰² Loi n° 83-635 du 13 juillet 1983 Available from <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000504474/>

¹⁰³ Musea, Yvette Roudy à l'affiche. Available from <http://www.musea.fr/exhibits/show/yvette-roudy-a-l-affiche/yvette-roudy-et-l-histoire-des>

¹⁰⁴ Speech by Mrs. Yvette Roudy, Minister for Women's Rights, in Marseilles on 24 April 1985, reprinted in “Citoyennes à part entière” of June 1983, on the new techniques of procreation and the legal issues raised.

¹⁰⁵ Yvette Roudy, les femmes sont une force [*]. Entretien avec Delphine Gardey, Jacqueline Laufer dans Travail, genre et sociétés 2002/1 (N° 7)

While she had planned to vote for Benoît Hamon in the 2017 citizens' primary, she withdrew her support shortly before the second round, blaming him for his remarks on the Islamic veil.

She is also a Freemason, she belongs to the Grande Loge Féminine de France (GLFF).

In 2006, she was the subject of a biography written by two journalists, entitled *Yvette Roudy, Madame LA Ministre*¹⁰⁶.

Her archives are deposited at the "Centre des archives du féminisme", hosted by the university library of the University of Angers¹⁰⁷.

III. 1. 3. In Somalia

As far as Somalia is concerned, the period of the first women representatives considerably changed, and for good reason as we already appointed in the short history of Somalia in Chapter II.

More than the vote that had already been given, solutions had to be found to get out of the economic, health, and social crisis.

In this case, too, two women showed courage, determination, and perseverance.

a. Edna Adan Ismail

Edna Adan was born in Hargeisa, the daughter of a Somali doctor¹⁰⁸, and trained as a nurse in the UK at Borough Polytechnic Institute, now London's South Bank University, where she is said to be "the first young Somali woman to study in Britain. She is also said to have been the first Somali nurse-midwife and the first Somali woman to drive. She married Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, a Somali politician who was Prime Minister of Somalia, in 1967.¹⁰⁹

In the 1970s, she worked for the Somali Ministry of Health and later as a delegate to the World Health Organization (WHO), campaigning against female genital mutilation. In the mid-1980s, she started building a hospital in Mogadishu. However, before it was completed, the Somali Civil War began, forcing her to leave the country. She rejoined WHO as a Technical Adviser in 1986. From 1987 to 1991, she was Regional Technical Officer for Mother and Child Health, focusing on issues related to harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and children (such as female genital mutilation), and on the training of midwives and traditional birth attendants in 22 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region for WHO. She then served as WHO Representative in Djibouti from 1991 to 1997.¹¹⁰

She then returned to Somaliland and built from scratch a maternity hospital in Hargeisa, which she then managed. The Edna Adan Maternity Hospital officially opened on 9 March 2002. Today, the hospital has two operating theatres, laboratories, a library, and a computer centre. The aim is to

¹⁰⁶ Elodie BÉCU et Karine PORTRAIT, *Yvette Roudy : Madame La Ministre, Danger Public*, Avril 2006

¹⁰⁷ www.archivesdufeminisme.fr/ *The aim of the "Association Archives du féminisme" is to make feminist archives of private origin, whether personal or associative, known and accessible for research. Furthermore, it develops knowledge of the history of feminism in France and contributes to the writing of this history through scientific publications.*

¹⁰⁸ LSBU, *Edna Adan Ismail, Honorary Doctor*. Available from <https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/stories/edna-adan-ismail-honorary-doctor>

¹⁰⁹ Berkley Center, *Edna Adan Ismail*. Available from <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/people/edna-adan-ismail>

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

improve the local population's health, and in particular, to reduce the high maternal and infant mortality rate¹¹¹.

In her hospital in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, she has also established a university. Being deeply concerned by education and training, she decided to train women in nursing, midwifery, and medicine. Since 2002, over 1,000 health professionals have been trained through her project.

However, Edna Adan also understood that when someone wants to make changes from inside a country, it is necessary to get involved in politics. So she stood for election and was elected. She became the only female Minister in the Somaliland government until July 2006, when she was replaced as Foreign Minister by former Information Minister Abdillahi Mohamed Dualeh.¹¹²

In recognition of her humanitarian work, Edna Adan Ismail's name was added to the Hall of Fame of the University of Toledo Medical Mission in Ohio in March 2007¹¹³. She has an Honorary Doctorate from Clark University in Massachusetts and was made an Honorary Fellow of the School of Nursing at Cardiff University in Wales on 8 July 2008.¹¹⁴

b. Fawsia Yusuf Haji Adam

Known as the Somali Iron Lady and currently, Chairperson of the National Democratic Party and Chair of HIIGSI Party Puntland State of Somalia, a coalition of 10 political parties in Somalia. Fawsia Yusuf Haji Adam is an emblematic figure on the Somali political scene.

Fawsia Adam's influence lies in the fact that she was the first woman to be appointed Deputy Prime Minister of Somalia and Foreign Minister in 2012¹¹⁵. Her determination and purposeful perseverance have enabled her to play an important role in Somalia and abroad. First, because she has shown that a woman in an Islamic country could do as well as a man and even better than a man.

*"My nomination as the foreign Minister is historic for the Somali country and particularly for the women of Somalia. It turns a new page for the political situation of our country and will lead to success and prosperity,"*¹¹⁶ she said.

She also gave a huge tribute to the revitalisation of the Somali economy by recovering national assets that had been frozen since the beginning of the civil war in 1991, as well as signing a bilateral cooperation agreement with the United Arab Emirates and China¹¹⁷.

Fawsia Adam stated in 2017, at the end of her mandate, that the transition period leading up to the next elections should be rich in proposals to implement the national census, the referendum on

¹¹¹ Edna Hospital Foundation. Available from <https://ednahospitalfoundation.org/>

¹¹² Edna Adan. Available from <http://www.trustconference.com/profile/index2.html?id=f0f34fd4-82d6-4823-a680-6f89ab515491>

¹¹³ Somaliland Press, *SOMALILAND: Edna Adan Ismail receives Legion d'Honneur from the French President*. Available from <https://unpo.org/article/10999>

¹¹⁴ AfricanasDiary, *Edna Adan Ismail // Somali*. Available from <https://africanasdiaryng.wordpress.com/2018/04/27/edna-adan-ismail-somali/>

¹¹⁵ BBC web article, 4 November 2012, *Somalia to get first female Foreign Minister*. Available from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20200037>

¹¹⁶ Global Post, *SOMALIA: Somalia gets first female foreign Minister*. Available from <http://peacewomen.org/content/somalia-somalia-gets-first-female-foreign-minister>

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

the draft constitution, and finally, the possibility of holding free and fair elections in 2021. With the end of Mohamed Abdullahi, Mohamed's government being most chaotic, with the inability to hold parliamentary and presidential elections, Hon. Fawzia Adam stressed that the priority was to carefully review "the basic political strategies within the constitutional framework on the adoption of the rotation and models of political party systems at the national level"¹¹⁸. She also highlighted the main political principles, functions, and commitments of the National Democratic Party as a whole, in particular its statutes and activities.

Fawsia Adam is very active on social networks and very much involved in politics also through the television channel that she launched, called RAAD TV¹¹⁹. She aims at giving a better image of unstable and war-torn Somalia.

Since then, her example has been followed by other women who also seek to change the situation in such a tormented country.

III. 2. Gender equality: an essential and non-negotiable element of democracy

A gender imbalance in decision-making processes makes elected assemblies less representative of society and thus endangers democratic principles. Therefore, the elimination of this imbalance must become a top priority for any democratic society. One of the most recurrent requirements of contemporary democracies is the equal distribution of power between men and women.

It is essential that women are included in political systems and that they have the opportunity to occupy as many leadership positions as possible in governmental bodies and elected assemblies - at national, local, and supranational levels - as their skills and sensitivity can make a valuable specific contribution to political institutions. It is also undeniable that the specific qualities of each gender are complementary; if men and women, therefore, work in a collaborative context and are committed to appreciating and valuing each other's characteristics, they will certainly achieve excellent results. A more significant presence of female figures in institutions could also lead to a redefinition of priorities and the inclusion of important new objectives in the political agenda; in order to meet the needs of a very diverse and eclectic population, society must be represented in all its complexity and versatility.

III. 2. 1. Better representation of women in politics and Gender quotas

Feminist organisations were late in taking up the cause of women's political representation. It did not become a priority until the 1990s, after several demands in the private and professional spheres had been met. In France, in 1999, a constitutional reform was adopted, which allowed the establishment of quotas for women. Two laws in 2000 and 2007¹²⁰ complete this system.

In 1997, in his general policy statement, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin committed himself to reform the Constitution to include parity.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹ Daily Monitor, *Adan: Emblem of new hope for Somalia*. Available from <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/magazines/people-power/adan-emblem-of-new-hope-for-somalia-1534438>

¹²⁰ Law n° 2000-493, 6 June 2000 and Law n° 2007-128 31 January 2007

The constitutional law of 8 July 1999¹²¹ completed Article 3 of the Constitution by stating that "the law shall promote equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions". In Article 4, it designated political parties as contributing to the implementation of the principle set out in Article 3.

The law to promote equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions was then enacted on 6 June 2000. It provided mandatory equality of candidacies for list elections and even alternation of candidates of each sex on the lists. The alternation was strict for one-round elections. For parliamentary elections, the law provided for optional equality: parties that did not present 50% of candidates of each sex had to pay a fine (the penalty is, in fact, deducted from the first part of the public funding).

The 2000 law was deficient as it did not cover municipal elections in towns with fewer than 3,500 inhabitants nor senatorial elections in departments that elected fewer than three Senators. Therefore, a new law to correct some of the weaknesses of this law was promulgated on 31 January 2007.

This law aims first to feminise local executives (municipalities with more than 3,500 inhabitants, regions) by providing for the application of parity for the election of deputy mayors as well as for the members of the permanent Commission and the vice-presidents of regional councils. In addition, from now on, candidates must have a substitute of the opposite sex.

Legislation in favour of parity has produced contrasting results depending on the voting system.

With strict constraints on the equal composition of candidate lists, the list system has enabled parity to become an effective reality in the city Councils of municipalities with more than 1,000 inhabitants, in regional Councils, in departmental Councils, and the French representation in the European Parliament.

Despite the enactment of the 2007 law requiring parity in the election of deputies, the proportion of women elected as mayors remains low (19.8% after the 2020 elections).

On the other hand, there has been very little progress towards parity in elections based on a single-member constituency system. It is mainly the case for legislative elections. While the proportion of women candidates in the first round has increased, the proportion of women elected to the National Assembly has risen from 10.9% in 1997 to 12.3% in 2002, 18.5% in 2007, and 26% in 2012. Despite this slight increase, the last legislative elections in June 2017 saw a record number of women elected, 224 women deputies, or 38.8% of the 577 deputy seats.¹²²

While the National Assembly is becoming more women-centred, there are still political parties that prefer to pay penalties rather than invest women in the place of outgoing MPs. Marlène Schiappa, Secretary of State for Gender Equality between 2017 and 2020, announced in 2019 that she wanted to multiply by five the penalties¹²³ imposed on political parties that do not respect parity in legislative elections as part of a bill for the economic emancipation of women initially planned for 2020.

¹²¹ Constitutional Law No. 99-569 of 8 July 1999 on equality between women and men

¹²² La Rédaction, *La parité politique*. Available from <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/19618-la-parite-politique>

¹²³ UN Women, Marlène Schiappa: "For generations, we have been nominating men just because they are men". Available from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/1/feature-marlene-schiappa-q-and-a>

For example, for the first round of municipal elections in 2020, although the lists of municipalities with more than 1,000 inhabitants respect parity, only 21% of the heads of lists are women¹²⁴. It is, therefore, necessary to look at other aspects of inequality: the way work is organised, how work and personal life are reconciled, forms of harassment, the way career progression is determined.

In Italy, the situation is different. At a time when the debate on equal opportunities was growing in Europe, Italy established the Office of the Minister for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 1996. On 12 July 1997, the Minister's functions were laid down by the Decree of the Council's President. Thus, the Department for Equal Opportunities was established by DPCM n. 405 of 28 October 1997. It would be modified over the years by ministerial decrees and for further competencies.¹²⁵

In this Italian context, after a process lasting almost two years, on the initiative of the then Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Ministers Stefania Prestigiacomo and Umberto Bossi, the Constitutional Law No 1 of 30 May 2003, Art. 1, amended Article 51 of the Constitution. (OJ General Series n.134 of 12-06-2003) and stated:

"All citizens of either sex shall be eligible for public office and elected positions on equal terms, in accordance with the requirements established by law.

*To this end, the Republic shall take appropriate measures to promote equal opportunities for men and women".*¹²⁶

Media talked immediately about "quote rosa", whereas the amendment itself never spoke of "pink quotas", but of "equal opportunities for men and women." It is a significant difference. The laws that were, therefore, to be enacted in successive years also referred to the under-represented gender, if in fact, women were and still are among the under-represented, then effectively, the aim is to bring more women into the decision-making sphere.

The debate on this subject in Italy was fierce between the promoters and the detractors of these proposals, which determined a change of era with their application. Even today, many debate their validity on the consequences in society. Thus, two radically opposed theses are strongly argued against each other.

Moreover, opponents believe that accepting the idea of quotas is a step backwards. It means recognizing that women are a species to be protected, forgetting all the achievements they have made on their own. They insist that it is not by guaranteeing the alternation of the sexes in the electoral lists that the respect of the female vision within the politics of our country is guaranteed. The presence of both genders should be, instead, the natural consequence of a free and democratic vote, as well as the presence of all political and social realities.

¹²⁴ DGCS - SDFE, *TOWARDS EFFECTIVE GENDER EQUALITY*. Available from <http://www.egalite-femmes-hommes.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/30652-DICOM-CC-2019-essentiel-ENG.pdf>

¹²⁵ Fonte Ministero per le Pari Opportunità

¹²⁶ LEGGE COSTITUZIONALE 30 maggio 2003, n. 1 Modifica dell'articolo 51 della Costituzione. (GU Serie Generale n.134 del 12-06-2003). «Tutti i cittadini dell'uno o dell'altro sesso possono accedere agli uffici pubblici e alle cariche elettive in condizioni di eguaglianza, secondo i requisiti stabiliti dalla legge. A tal fine la Repubblica promuove con appositi provvedimenti le pari opportunità tra uomini e donne». (Translation made by myself).

Another argument used against gender quotas is that of merit. The introduction of "pink quotas" has adverse effects in relation to actual merit. It often happens that unprepared women are on the list who have been nominated not because they are competent but because they are women.

However, those in favour of introducing quotas for women believe that these are not instruments that would be detrimental to merit but serve to remove obstacles so that deserving women have the same opportunity to be represented in institutions. In fact, if there are few women representatives in political institutions, it is not because they do not deserve it, but because there is male dominance in the choice of the order of the list and therefore of 'if and how' they are elected. Thus, the demand for equality, which increases the chances of election for women, who have always been discriminated against in their access to politics, cannot challenge that criterion. The argument of denied merit is a cunning alibi to hide the existence of discrimination and power that excludes women.

Merit has been used in the past to hide the existence of the issue of equality. As Marilisa D'Amico, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Milan points out:

*"I am amazed that the demand for "merit" is still being opposed to the demand for equality, as if increasing the chances of election for women, who have always been discriminated against in access to politics, could call that criterion into question. But, on the contrary, it is precisely the current discriminatory attitude that keeps valuable skills and professionalism for our country out of the parliamentary chambers."*¹²⁷

In Somalia, the women's struggle is beginning to gain real positive momentum. It is a long process in a patriarchal and traditional society, but progress is visible. The practices and tendencies towards a male society divided into clans into the spheres of state institutions are to be reversed somewhat.

The fighting for civil and political rights for Somali women has taken a step further. On 24 June 2020, the only House of Representatives passed a bill¹²⁸ calling for 30% women in both branches of Parliament. The presidential elections for which this text was voted, were due to take place in February this year. Unfortunately, conditions in Somalia have not improved, and the incumbent President has failed to organise them. It will therefore take a few more weeks or months before they take place. It is still complicated to say under what conditions they will be held. The amendment to the electoral law is still awaiting adoption.

Many educated women hope that the Women's Representation Act will not just be a token implementation. *"We want women in parliament who know how to read and write, who are interested in the future of Somali women and who can campaign, especially against sexual violence,"* Fawsia Adan wrote on her Facebook page.

¹²⁷ Iole Natoli, Nessuna garanzia di parità per l'accesso alle elezioni politiche, "noidonne.org", in un'intervista a Marilisa D'Amico, professore ordinario di Diritto Costituzionale presso l'Università Statale di Milano, 15 luglio 2014: *"Mi stupisce che ancora oggi si opponga l'esigenza del "merito" alla richieste di parità, come se incrementare le chances di elezione delle donne, da sempre discriminate nell'accesso alla politica, possa mettere in discussione quel criterio. All'opposto, è proprio l'atteggiamento discriminatorio vigente che tiene fuori dalle Aule parlamentari competenze e professionalità preziose per il nostro paese."* ((Translation made by myself)).

¹²⁸ Constant HAÏTI, *Un quota de 30% de femmes prévu au Parlement*. Available from <https://www.iknowpolitics.org/fr>, 24-06-2020

It should not be forgotten that the illiteracy rate in Somalia is high in the cities and even higher in rural areas. An elected woman can quickly become a mere propaganda tool for the clans that have appointed her.

In the early 2000s, women represented a very low percentage of Parliamentarians in the country. Women elected during the 2012 vote were almost 14%. The last election represented a significant increase that saw almost 80 women elected as representatives.¹²⁹ Through this promising vote, the female activists want to change the situation in the country. Indeed, the text was approved. Unfortunately, the Senate did not ratify it yet.

Deqa Abdiqasim Salad¹³⁰, President of the women's rights organisation Hear Women Foundation, criticised this announcement:

*"We women made the mistake of not pushing hard enough for the quota to be included in the Constitution; A law is harder to break, at the moment it is only a recommendation. I fear that we will come out of this election with less than 24%."*¹³¹

Therefore, a binding quota is a necessary step, says former Foreign Minister Fawzia Adan.

*"Quotas for women parliamentarians are important to safeguard women's rights. But also to fairly reflect the share of the population they represent in Parliament."*¹³²

As we can see in many countries, quotas at the top of the hierarchy considerably raise the essential question of access to power. Like other policies, such as policies to combat sexual and gender-based violence and harassment, they highlight the conflicting dimensions of gender inequality. Women who decide to pursue a career in politics are particularly courageous. It is undeniable that this choice implies huge sacrifices; yet there are many women who are willing to make them and, fortunately, many men who are willing to help them get these leadership positions.

III. 3. The low-status “feminized” policy area

Traditionally, women were poorly represented in a government cabinet, and when they were, they were mostly reduced to a low-status and "feminized" policy area. These traditional distributions show that few people consider women as part of the nominees for cabinet meetings. However, in the past decade, the number of female appointments, gender, and prestige in most countries, like France or Italy, have changed. As a result, the opportunities for women to serve as Ministers are different and will be explained in three ways: political institutions, social indicators of gender equality, and broad trends in the political recruitment of women.

The country score is based on the proportion of women ministers in the cabinet. Even if it is due to the gender and prestige of the position, nominations are paid more attention to, and most seats are broken by the traditional distribution method. This measure recognizes that the number of women may not match the gender and prestige of the allocated portfolio. In some cases, women may hold power, but they are mainly concentrated in low-status positions and women's sectors. Therefore, it is

¹²⁹ Nita BHALLA, Mohammed OMER, *Somali women demand a guarantee of 30% of Parliament in 2021 election*, Reuters, 28 OCTOBER, 2020

¹³⁰ Deqa ABDI QASIM, President and CEO Hear Women Foundation. Available from <http://www.hearwomen.org/>

¹³¹ Silja FRÖHLICH, Carole ASSIGNON, *En Somalie, les femmes veulent plus de place en politique*, DW.com, 27-02-2021

¹³² Ibidem

necessary to include all three aspects of information to more comprehensively assess and compare the status of women in the cabinets of various countries and recognize the different ways to achieve greater equality in these nominations.

Competing theories have been established that can explain the political appointment patterns related to women. The main issue concerns the structure of political institutions, which affects the nominees who may feel pressure to be recruited and placed in less conventional roles. The second focus is the spirit of gender equality created by women's status in society and the government's commitment. Moreover, it is believed that the presence of women in the political elite determines both the requirements for more non-traditional women's cabinet appointments and the demand for them.

In addition, it is important to recognize economic power because it is closely related to inequality between men and women. Modernization theory predicts that increased levels of prosperity can empower different groups by providing opportunities to assume new social and economic roles while also guiding citizens to adopt "post-materialist" values such as gender equality. For example, in countries where women's right to participate in the public sphere is widely accepted, voters are less likely to oppose women's participation in the cabinet. In addition, women's public presence in life may make it increasingly difficult for them to be excluded from these positions. As a result, they are more likely to be nominated, hold prestigious jobs, and enjoy a higher reputation.

The equality hypothesis believes that the pressure of an inclusive cabinet stems from the entire society. It suggested that the status of women in a Cabinet should best be explained by the reduction in traditional gender norms. As people's expectations of appropriate roles for women have changed, countries where men and girls participate in the public through similar economic and political participation rates, will gain greater equality. When the government makes a clear commitment to women's rights, it legitimises the country, provides loans to support efforts for equal opportunities for men and women, and promotes social change by improving the level of development and eliminating customary power, for it generally further fosters the spirit of gender equality.

In countries where women are heavily involved in politics, the number of designated women has also increased. At the same time, the presence of women can undermine traditional gender norms. In this case, the government can make greater demands on nominated women or exclude female capabilities. This hypothesis predicts that the pressure on women's positions in various cabinet positions comes from the composition of political elites.

For instance, government ministries can be divided into two genders. Historically speaking, those, which are involved in issues related to the general public political sphere or related to the economy, including religion and wage labour, are men's Ministries. On the contrary, those related to the family and the private sphere of the family, including care and education, are closely related to women. This dual definition means that excellence is not only the public/private nature of the problem at hand but also the useful meaning of the portfolio in the relevant sense of the traditional view of the roles of men and women.

In a report by the High Council for Equality in France in October 2016¹³³, we can see:

¹³³ HCE, *Quel partage du pouvoir entre les femmes et les hommes élu.e.s au niveau local ? État des lieux de la parité aux niveaux communal, intercommunal, départemental et régional*, Rapport n°2017-01-27-PAR-026 publié le 02 février 2017.

- The persistence of male bastions: finance, management of European structural funds, foreign and European affairs, transport, land-use planning, general affairs;
- The slight increase in the proportion of women managing 'economic development', and peripheral sectors such as attractiveness or new technologies, sustainable development, and energy transition;
- The over-representation of women in fields that have been invested in for several years, such as education, guidance, vocational training (major regional budgets given the regions' compulsory competencies), integration, higher education, and research, cultural affairs, community disabilities, youth and living together;

This picture of politics is completely shared in Italy, where you can find an identical situation. The last Draghi government perfectly illustrates this distribution of roles. There are eight women Ministers out of a total of 23, while there are fifteen men.¹³⁴

1) Daniele Franco, Minister for the Economy, 2) Giancarlo Giorgetti as Minister for Economic Development, 3) Roberto Speranza as Minister for Health, 4) Roberto Cingolani as Minister for the Environment Ecological Transition, 5) Luigi Di Maio as Minister for Foreign Affairs, 6) *Marta Cartabia as Minister for Justice*, 7) Renato Brunetta as Minister for Public Administration, 8) Andrea Orlando as Minister for Labour, 9) *Luciana Lamorgese as Interior Minister*, 10) *Erika Stefani as Minister for Disability*, 11) Vittorio Colao as Minister for Technological Innovation, 12) Patrizio Bianchi as Minister for Education, 13) Dario Franceschini, as Minister for Culture, 14) Federico D'Incà, as Minister for Relations with Parliament, 15) Massimo Garavaglia, as Minister for Tourism, 16) *Elena Bonetti, as Minister for Equal Opportunities*, 17) *Mara Carfagna, as Minister for the South and Cohesion*, 18) Lorenzo Guerini as Minister for Defence, 19) *Maria Stella Gelmini, as Minister for Autonomies*, 20) *Fabiana Dadone, as Minister for Youth Policy*, 21) Stefano Patuanelli as Minister of Agriculture, 22) Enrico Giovannini as Minister for Infrastructures, 23) *Cristina Messa as Minister for University and Research*.

In other countries such as Somalia, identifying education or family fields as less prestigious does not exist. Indeed, holding these powers means that they are dealing with extremely important issues. However, the situation today is unfortunately completely deadlocked. The country is no longer governed. The terrorist groups of Al Shabaab, the Somali Al Qaeda, are preventing any expected resumption of the electoral process, which should have taken place a few weeks ago.

IV. Women and economy

In Europe, work and, therefore, the economy are very much linked to education and training. Yet, curiously, although women often have a higher university education than men, they do not enter the higher positions one might expect.

This example is obviously incongruous for a country like Somalia, where girls rarely have access to education or only at a relatively low level. Moreover, it must be said that 60% of the country is still nomadic and that the areas furthest from the capital Mogadishu are not easy to reach for teachers. The risk of being attacked or killed by Al Shabaab fundamentalists is also exceptionally high. All this contributes to leaving women very much alone and dependent on the men of their village.

¹³⁴ Governo Italiano Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, *I Ministri del Governo Draghi*. Available from <https://www.governo.it/it/articolo/i-ministri-del-governo-draghi/16183>

The working life of women in Italy and France is a somewhat different matter; even if it is based on reasonably similar realities, the particularities are mainly cultural.

Until a few decades ago, Italy was a country where women stayed at home, once they were married, to look after their family, their husbands, their children, and even their parents because these large families often lived under the same roof or very close to each other. This reality is still present today, even though the cost of living has increased, and women have had to look for work to contribute to the family household. But still, many of them, young women, feel much more fulfilled within the family they have formed with their husbands than outside in a more stressful working life. It explains why so many women, brilliant in their studies, for personal reasons, prefer to imagine themselves as mothers and wives rather than workers.

In the past, when the reason was to take care of a large family with more than three children, it was quite easy to understand that a family in addition to a job created stress and burdensome (unpaid) working hours. Today, Italian women are among the Europeans who have the fewest children: 1.27 per woman (Istat 2021 data). And yet, for many of them, when the husband has a profitable job, they stay at home. For those who work, it is unfortunately not easy because services are lacking so much.

For France, the situation is changing: first and foremost, because women's work has been a reality for decades. Many women born in the 1930s have had the same working life as men, often with a different job but just as demanding in terms of time spent outside the home.

French women are also having more children, about 1.84 children per woman, according to the latest INSEE 2021 data. Thus, in addition to mentalities, there are also more suitable structures for early childhood that allow women to have an active life.

Where the paths meet is when it comes to the use of part-time work. In both countries, women choose to work part-time but often have to do so because there is no other form of working contract. Moreover, if a worker is to lose a job, it is much more likely to be a woman than a man.

As far as the situation in Somalia is concerned, women cannot count on state structures to help them with their children, or if they exist, it is only in the main cities that they can be found. Like schools, for example. A woman's life is therefore very much linked to the clan to which she belongs. Through the clan, solidarity will be achieved, and given that Somali women have an average of 6 children, this solidarity is crucial and even vital.

However, in this period of pandemic, many women cannot work and hospitals can no longer provide for the needs of patients. Therefore, the main problem is the survival of an exanguished people who are looking to their most ancestral traditions and Islam as a way out of all their troubles.

IV. 1. In the business world, normative studies on entrepreneurship

It is not only in politics but in the world of work in general that quotas have been introduced. Gender quotas set a mandatory percentage of both genders in employment to ensure equal representation. It often lacks in the world of work, and in most cases, women are underrepresented compared to men. Quotas are a targeted instrument that can be very effective in achieving their objective of increasing the presence of women in key positions. In its most legally binding version, e.g., the banning of electoral lists that do not respect the gender balance, it can immediately achieve its quantitative objective, as we already saw in Chapter III.

In France, this method was inaugurated with the 1999-2000 laws on parity in politics¹³⁵. As part of the positive actions, a law setting quotas for women on boards of directors and supervisory boards was also enacted on 27 January 2011.¹³⁶ This law provides for the gradual introduction of quotas to move towards the feminisation of the management bodies of large companies (public companies and companies listed on the stock exchange). Three years after the law was passed, the bodies concerned must include at least 20% women. Six years later, the proportion of women must reach 40%. Failure to comply with these quotas will result in the nullity of appointments (except for women). In recent decades, gender equality policies have increasingly used quotas to market women's access to positions of power, particularly within the political area (electoral quotas) and within the economic and social spheres.

Starting from a clear and authentic reflection on the number of women with higher education in Europe and their representation in the boards of directors of large companies and national and European institutions, the European Parliament adopted the resolution of 6 July 2011 on women and business leadership (2010/2115(INI)), urging all European countries to initiate debates and, above all, to take precise measures within their national legislation to integrate the parity measures highlighted in the document.

Italy, above all, enacted the Golfo-Mosca Law on 12 July 2011¹³⁷. The country has adopted legislation to promote gender balance on the boards of various types of companies. This law varies according to the companies themselves, the targets and deadlines that have been established, and the penalties proposed for failure to meet the targets. These targets are not set in stone but should prepare for a change in the years to come.

In fact, the law states that there must be a gender balance among directors of listed companies: "The under-represented gender must obtain at least one-third of the directors elected." This criterion must be applied for three consecutive terms (Article 1(1)) and bodies with more than three members. Consob is called upon to guide, supervise and sanction non-compliance with this requirement. In addition, not only the under-represented gender (women) has to enter the government bodies, but also the boards of auditors (Article 1(3)).

IV. 2. Gender pay gap

One of the critical issues often raised by women is the gender pay gap. All over the world, discrimination prevents women from being paid as much as their male colleagues for the same work. The well-known phrase "equal pay for equal work" is, in fact, used by the female population to demand that women be taken seriously and achieve the long-awaited gender equality, not only in theory but also in practice and economic terms.

However, many studies show that discrimination is only one of the causes of the gender pay gap. For example, in many countries of the world, not so long ago, most women did not work outside the home; if you look at the 1950s, you can see that the workforce's number was deficient. But when it became clear that women had to earn money, they started to be given repetitive and uninteresting

¹³⁵ Constitutional Law No. 99-569 of 8 July 1999 on equality between women and men

¹³⁶ Copé-Zimmermann's law of 2011, Sauvadet's law of 2012 and 2013 on higher education and research.

¹³⁷ Law 120/2011, concerning equal access to companies' administrative and control bodies listed on regulated markets. (11G0161) (OJ General Series n.174 of 28-07-2011).

tasks; in other words, they were not allowed to aspire to a real career. Thus, it was hard for a woman to become a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer not so long ago.

At that time, the wage gap was due to several interrelated factors, first of all, the rather low education rate of women, but also the absence of women in the labour market, the fact that it was perfectly legal to pay them less, and finally, several cultural norms on gender roles: women were only supposed to take care of household chores, their children and the old parents. They had no freedom of choice.

However, this has all changed in a few decades. Today, it has become customary to see women competing for scholarships - as they usually study more than men - attending schools that were previously closed to them, or taking up traditionally male jobs. All but one of the factors that caused the pay gap has been reduced. Indeed, although many women have become successful doctors, lawyers, and heads of state, they are still expected to look after their children and maintain the household. Many surveys show that only a tiny proportion of the population believes women should work full-time when they have children. Mothers are often content with part-time work, and even when they decide to work full-time like their partner, they are still the ones who, in most cases, take care of the children and the housework. For this reason, men are more likely to be promoted at work: it is challenging for men to turn down a job or to accept part-time work to take care of domestic activities. The reason why the wage gap has not yet been significantly reduced is, therefore, a purely cultural factor.

While the principle of equal pay for equal work has been enshrined in the French law¹³⁸ for over 48 years, in France, in 2020, women are still paid less than men, suffering a 16% pay gap with their male counterparts.

*"Half of the pay gap between women and men managers cannot be explained by the characteristics of the job held. For example, in 2018, the median pay of male managers was 16% higher than that of women, and a gap of 8% remains if we compare the pay of men and women in the same positions with the same characteristics."*¹³⁹

Numbers are even worse for the less educated categories of workers.

One of the primary reasons for this gap is that women very often tend to work in more administrative jobs than men, who, on the other hand, choose more technology- or computer-oriented careers or graduate from highly rated science or business schools. They also often work particularly well-paid overtime. Women who also look after their children and family do not have all this time to devote to outside work.

Often men also have an easier time climbing the corporate ladder and boast a higher salary than women who are not “lucky” enough to get the proper promotion at the right time.

Nevertheless, if we go back to the strict principle of equal pay for equal work, we can observe a gap of 8%, which remains absolutely inexplicable and falls within the cultural criteria we spoke about a short while ago.

¹³⁸ Law n°72-1143 of 22 December 1972 RELATING TO EQUAL REMUNERATION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN JORF of 24 December 1972

¹³⁹ Apec study, "Les écarts de salaires femmes-hommes chez les cadres", February 2020.

It can be said that the Italian situation has the same causes as in France. The gap, though, is slightly less in Italy because the public sector is larger and pays follow more equal standards. However, the cultural factor and the obligations of women remain the same.

In 2018, the Italian GPG calculated in this way was 5.5%, a value decidedly lower than the EU28 average, which stood at 15.3% and down from 2014 (6.1%). However, it should be emphasised that if we only consider the privately controlled sector, the Italian GPG reaches 17.7%. It is, in fact, the highest presence of women in the publicly controlled sector, which is known to have a lower GPG (4.4%), which determines the particularly low figure for Italy.¹⁴⁰

It is tough today to have data on the gender pay gap in Somalia. First of all, because the data are rarely provided, but also because only the public sector, which has been under pressure for years, could provide answers, and given that the almost absolute majority of positions of responsibility are given to men, it is quite easy to imagine that the difference is extremely large. Furthermore, women tend to work in the informal labor market where they have no possibility to make their rights observed.

Closing the gender pay gap is not impossible, and the European Parliament has committed itself to do so in recent years through action plans to be implemented.

IV. 3. Equality: a European issue

Already enshrined in the 1957 Treaty of Rome, equality between women and men is now the subject of Article 23¹⁴¹ of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The European Union has been making real progress in this area for years now. Despite this, there is still much progress to be made.

As we noticed, women earn on average 16% less than men. In France, it is about 15,2%, in Italy, about 5,5%. Men and women also experience different employment situations¹⁴² depending on the number of children they have. The employment rate in the EU in 2017 was 73% for men and 62% for women.

Without children, women work at 66% compared to 74% for men. With a child, the rate is 71% for women and 80% for men. Two children do not change the figures much for women, 72%, but they increase again for men, 90%. Finally, the third child creates a collapse of work for women, and the employment rate drops to 57% while it is relatively stable for men, 85%.

Moreover, part-time work is a typically female aspect; almost a third of women choose it or suffer from it.

Finally, unemployment remains fairly balanced, with 7.9% for women and 7.4% for men. Although the past year has been heavier for women because of the Covid pandemic for job losses in the EU, many EU Women working in sectors such as retail, residential care, domestic work, and

¹⁴⁰LA STRUTTURA DELLE RETRIBUZIONI IN ITALIA - ANNO 2018. Available from https://www.aranagenzia.it/attachments/article/11572/REPORT_STRUTTURA_RETRIBUZIONI_2018.pdf

¹⁴¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Title III Equality, Article 23: *"Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex."*

¹⁴² Eurostat, The life of women and men in Europe - A STATISTICAL PORTRAIT 2020 edition

clothing production, have suffered the heaviest job losses, as they make up the majority of the workforce in these specific sectors.

The European Union is undoubtedly an opportunity to reverse the situation. It is fully committed to eliminating inequalities and promoting a better balance between men and women. No other political entity in the world has been so much involved in this issue.

One of the main thrusts of the European Commission's policy is to improve the work-life balance. Accordingly, it is working on a directive to harmonise legislation on parental leave with the aim of making it better paid and accessible to all parents, men and women.

Although women are still paid less than men, the European Union has launched an action plan to reduce these inequalities. In this respect, the case-law of the European Court of Justice is a necessary remedy. Indeed, the principle that for the same work, or work to which the exact value is attributed, any discrimination based on sex must be eliminated, was established as early as 1978 in the Defrenne ruling.¹⁴³

Europe's institutions are now seeking to shed light on the different countries that make up Europe so that they can better act on the conditions that require it. Probably the fact of having a woman president of the European Commission, for the first time, makes the cause of women more important and her desire to act in favour of it greater.

Unfortunately, Ursula von der Leyen experienced a very humiliating situation. She recently found herself in a particularly unpleasant position during her visit to Turkey with President Erdogan and European Council President Charles Michel. The visit was aimed at restoring a more peaceful relationship with Turkey, following concessions made by its President, who has become more conciliatory towards Greece and Cyprus. The "Sofagate", as the episode was called, had a worldwide impact on the very offensive way the Turkish President, with Michel's approval, treated the President of the European Commission. Mrs Von der Leyen was relegated to a sofa at a distance from the two men while they were talking together. It is nothing new on the part of Erdogan but absolutely unacceptable on the part of Charles Michel towards his Commission counterpart.

“Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union, but it is not yet a reality. In business, politics, and society as a whole, we can only reach our full potential if we use all of our talent and diversity. Using only half of the population, half of the ideas or half of the energy is not good enough,” as Ursula Von der Leyen declared.¹⁴⁴

IV. 4. Poverty: a gender perspective

Poverty is a plague that affects all nations. But, of course, the least educated are the first to suffer, especially in the world we live in, where solidarity is sorely lacking. Poverty has invaded the streets of the big cities in our Western societies. However, it is more of male poverty that shows itself on the pavements. Women stay more in the background; rarely will a woman panhandle.

¹⁴³ Judgment of the Court of 15 June 1978. - Gabrielle Defrenne v Société anonyme belge de navigation aérienne Sabena. - Reference for a preliminary ruling: Cour de cassation - Belgium. - Equal conditions of employment for men and women. - Case 149/77.

¹⁴⁴ European Commission, Gender Equality Strategy Factsheet - Striving for a Union of Equality: The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, 5 March 2020

Without reaching these extremes, poverty has advanced enormously, and the 'fourth world' is ever more before our eyes.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that *“women make up the majority of the world's poorest people and the number of women living in rural poverty has increased by 50% since 1975. They provide two-thirds of the world's hours worked and produce half the world's food, but receive only 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's assets.”*¹⁴⁵

In Somalia, poverty is pushed to an unimaginable degree of suffering.

After the fall of Siad Barre in 1991, the country fell into chaos. The warlords divided the country, first in two parts: the south and centre to General Aidid and Mogadishu up to the north, (the territories pledging allegiance to Ali Mahdi, who later became President of the country). At the time, the United States arrived on Somali soil; they left after six months, and the situation was so bad that it was afraid of getting bogged down in a second Vietnam.

Years passed without any solution being found. Then, in 1996, Aidid was killed by a bullet fired by the opposing faction. He left a desolate territory where anarchy reigned supreme and where corruption and violence could flourish without fear. In this land of southern Somalia, in particular, violence against civilians has taken place. These abandoned lands were occupied first by Pakistani troops who brought with them the idea of a very intransigent Islam. In addition, the Al Qaeda terrorist group saw an opportunity to train their troops in places where no government came to monitor what was going on. This new branch was called Al Shabaab, which means ‘youth’ in Arabic. These young boys turned terrorists are one of the major causes of the flight of the local population and their forced migration to the nearest neighbour: Kenya.

We should not forget that Somali people who arrived in the big Kenyan camps were trying to escape from Somalia to go to Europe or the United States. They would never have thought of staying in the makeshift camps of ‘Kakuma’ and ‘Dadaab’.

Unlike voluntary migration, forced and irregular Somali migration is now a highly problematic phenomenon for Kenya, mainly because the number of migrants continues to grow.

Violence and conflict drive people to flee their habitual residence. In that case, we can easily assume that Al Shabaab terrorism and arbitrary and widespread violence are the real motives of the Somali migration. In all these situations, this climate of total uncertainty makes the livelihoods of affected people extremely precarious.

Underlying triggers such as water scarcity, food insecurity, drought, environmental degradation, famine, and natural disasters and poverty, but also inadequate livelihoods due to insufficient economic development are increasingly important factors in the problem of displacement. Especially where such conditions have been openly created by force and are accompanied by violence, they often oblige people to leave their homes, by forcing vulnerable people to escape from situations that compromise their very existence and put them at risk of death.

As always, the first to bear the brunt of this violence and poverty are women. Many of them have been left alone with their children, abandoned by their husbands who often preferred to return to their country after being recruited by the terrorist groups. These women are doubly poor because

¹⁴⁵ Pauvreté: une perspective de genre. Résolution du Parlement européen du 26 mai 2016 sur la pauvreté: une perspective d'égalité entre hommes et femmes (2015/2228(INI))

not only have they left everything behind, but also, without their husbands and living in a patriarchal society recreated in the camps, they remain unprotected and with few means of subsistence.

Those women refugees, like many others, are survivors. Fortunately, humanitarian organisations are working hard to alleviate hunger and the many problems they face. For if they manage to survive, their children will not be orphans.

IV. 5. Micro economy and International organisations

Evidence of the terrible situation faced by refugees and IDP¹⁴⁶ is spread before our eyes in news, social networks, and official reports. This situation is not easy for anyone, but it particularly affects women and minority groups. Somali women's pre-existing forms of vulnerability reach appalling levels in refugee camps and conflict zones or when they are forced to move, as we noticed.

The latest Review of Gender Equality in Operations (UNHCR, 2016) report presents that, despite the efforts made towards women and girls in these contexts, there is an urgent need to invest in their protection and empowerment. According to this report, women face even more significant difficulties in finding sustainable and income-generating activities.

In addition, their culturally imposed roles as women in a traditional clan-based society, as the Somali one, prevent them from holding leadership positions and often from participating in programme development and implementation if they don't receive the chief approval. Similarly, they are repeatedly denied the right to work, making them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. UNHCR also emphasizes that sexual and gender-based violence occurs more frequently in displacement contexts.

Based on their experience and information exchange, many professional humanitarian agencies consider that it is imperative to encourage civil society to address the root causes of forced migration at the national and international levels to ensure the safety and empowerment of women. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and NGOs like Terre des Hommes, present on the spot, intend to further influence local and national authorities to guarantee migrant women the same rights they should enjoy anywhere else.

They insist on various issues that could drastically change dangerous situations and collect gender-disaggregated data to design gender-sensitive responses. They also provide vocational training for women and ensure that girls go to school and learn to read and write.

It is crucial to grant women the right to work to prevent abuse and exploitation in the workplace, often inside the camps, and help ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families¹⁴⁷.

From an economic point of view, as in Somalia, these camps in northern Kenya, not far from the Somali border, rely entirely on humanitarian aid sent by foreign States and international

¹⁴⁶ IDP: Internally Displaced Persons

¹⁴⁷ OHCHR, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990. Available from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cmw.aspx>

organisations. Kenya itself cannot afford to give any help there. Moreover, its own population living in the surrounding area is as poor as the refugees.

The federal state of Somalia has been a fully assisted state for the last twenty years. The European Union, the United States, and many others have been spending billions of euros for decades, but the results of this commitment are more than disappointing. While Somali society is growing, the government of the federal State and its member States, which the international community has pledged to support, remains paralysed by power struggles between clans. Moreover, the government, dependent on international aid and deeply corrupt, has little popular support, especially as it is unable to kick-start the development of the battered country. Indeed, the main purpose of Somali politics is to manoeuvre to position itself to benefit from these flows. According to Transparency International, Somalia consistently scores the highest of all countries in the world on 'corruption perception'.

Through the figure below, we can notice that more than 93% of financial flows come from international aid. The government recorded \$208 million in revenue in 2020; the Shabaabs came in at \$180 million, or just under 7% between them. The off-budget, i.e. the money coming from Turkey, the Gulf countries and especially Qatar, as well as from neighbouring countries, amounted to about US\$ 250 million.¹⁴⁸



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In addition, the authorities also benefited from more than \$2 billion in annual international humanitarian and development aid funds (according to UNOCHA), as well as \$1.5 billion spent annually on security by international partners (Ministry of Planning estimate, 2019). Then, Somalis abroad sended approximately \$1.6 billion per year to their relatives in Somalia¹⁵⁰.

Despite years of colonization, dictatorship, civil war, armed conflicts, and terrorism that have hit and weakened the country in all areas of the society, from education, health, democracy, freedom of speech, economy, and trade, Somalia has a pretty 'good' private sector. Of course, when we say

¹⁴⁸ Robert Kluijver, Understanding the current Somali political crisis, 28 April 2021. Available from <https://www.robertk.space>

¹⁴⁹ Ibidem

¹⁵⁰ Ibidem

'good', it is all relative, since it still represents a small part of the economy. Local sources of income are dwarfed by external financial flows

Women, though, play an essential role in it. Since most of them are illiterate because they have not been able to go to school and get a formal education and don't have significant marketable skills, they have difficulty getting jobs in the legal sector. Furthermore, those jobs are often low-paid ones.

Therefore, most women wage earners work in the informal sector; they form an increasingly important part of the Small and Medium Enterprises field. Most of them have stalls and sell their products on the market. The sale is always local, as little or no trade leaves Somalia. The banana trade, which was the flagship of the Somali economy until the 1990s, is only a memory today.

Women are poorly organised and therefore do not have a union to protect them. They are, therefore, much more at risk from the mafia-like methods of the Al Shabaab groups, which do not hesitate to threaten or rape them if they do not pay.

In recent years, United Nations projects have emerged through joint projects between its International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Swedish International Cooperation Agency (SIDA) to promote women's empowerment in Somalia. Their objectives are:

- *“Creating an improved enabling environment supporting women’s economic empowerment*
- *Increasing capacity of women’s associations to address barriers to employment and economic empowerment*
- *Increasing access to skills and financial/non-financial business development services to improve income-generating capacity, productivity, and competitiveness.”¹⁵¹*

In addition, micro-credit has emerged in recent years. Created by Professor Muhammad Yunus¹⁵², an economist at the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1976, micro-credit has gained a following all over the world, especially in emerging, poor and war-torn countries. Somalia is one of them.

This financing consists of granting a small amount of credit with or without a guarantee to people who cannot take out bank loans or to those who live in a critical situation of precariousness. It allows borrowers to improve their standard of living or financial resources through micro-enterprises. The small financial fund is to be repaid in the short term. This system is thus a weapon in the fight against poverty to achieve dignity. Islamic microfinance also exists since the 2010s.

V. Women, violence and civil society

Women’s lives in the West have changed considerably over the past three decades regarding attitudes, education, access to employment, and health care structures that focus on the mother and child. As a matter of fact, many women see their lives positively because they feel fulfilled in their working life and family life.

¹⁵¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), Women’s Economic Empowerment project in Somalia. Available from <https://www.ilo.org/africa/technical-cooperation>

¹⁵² Muhammad Yunus is a Bangladeshi social entrepreneur and economist awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for founding the Grameen Bank (The Poor People bank). Available from <https://www.unitiperidiritiumani.it/voices-for-human-rights/muhammad-yunus.html>

However, the Covid pandemic that humanity has experienced and is still experiencing has created many changes for women and men. Unfortunately, access to health care has been limited as many hospitals and clinics have closed initially or have been requisitioned for Covid-specific care.

It has been true worldwide and of course in Africa too, with the difference that the African continent is already particularly hard hit and plagued by so many other diseases that kill thousands of people every year, with women and children being the most affected. The coronavirus pandemic poses a new threat to African women by penalising access to maternity services and contraception. Numerous difficulties have arisen, linked to the closure of health centres¹⁵³ and tensions in supply chains dependent on imports, mainly from China and India.

Furthermore, it is sadly true that in wars and epidemics, women are more exposed to sexual violence. For example, associations working in Somalia for women's rights and access to family planning report increased violence during the lockdown.

In all latitudes, unfortunately, violence against women is a terrible plague. Even when women live in peaceful countries. Every day and in every nation, we hear about femicide. Why such violence? Why so much hatred against innocent victims? For many, it is a question of frustration, of desires for control and domination; for others, it deals with ancestral habits which consider women to be inferior beings who can be subjugated as one pleases. This violence is an intolerable scourge that must be fought at the highest levels so that women do not feel abandoned. It is a question of human rights.

V. 1. The Istanbul Convention (2011) - Gender violence/femicide

For many years, violence against women was not recognised within domestic walls; It could be when the violence came from outside but was then considered a crime against morality and not against the person.

National reports and surveys have revealed the extent of the problem in Europe. In particular, it showed a wide variation across Europe in national responses to violence against women and domestic violence. Thus, the need for harmonised legal standards to ensure that victims receive the same level of protection across Europe became apparent. It was, therefore, necessary to use a supranational treaty to intervene and establish binding standards specifically aimed at preventing gender-based violence, protecting victims of violence, and punishing perpetrators.¹⁵⁴

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, is a key treaty to protect women, children, and migrant women from violence.

The Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 7 April 2011. It was opened for signature during the 121st session of the Committee of Ministers in

¹⁵³ Surveys conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) revealed major disruptions to essential health services in more than two-thirds of the world's countries in 2020: up to 63% fewer pre- and post-natal check-ups, care for sick and malnourished children cut in half, and an explosion in violence against women and girls.

¹⁵⁴ Striving for a Union of Equality: The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025- European Commission.

Istanbul on 11 May 2011. After Andorra ratified the Convention for the tenth time on 22 April 2014, the Convention entered into force on 1 August 2014¹⁵⁵. By 2021, 34 States out of 47 have ratified it.

The treaty states that violence against women is rooted in the inequalities that exist between men and women. It indicates they are to be found in the differences in gender roles attributed to either women or men in a very compartmentalised way, which has given rise to many stereotypes. The Convention specifies that “the term ‘gender’ refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men”¹⁵⁶.

The purposes of this Convention are to:

a. protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence;

b. contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women;

c. design a comprehensive framework, policies, and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence;

d. promote international co-operation with a view to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;

*e. provide support and assistance to organisations and law enforcement agencies to effectively co-operate to adopt an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women and domestic violence.*¹⁵⁷

States that ratify the Convention must criminalise several offences, including psychological violence (Article.33), stalking (Article.34), physical violence (Article.35), sexual violence, including rape, explicitly covering any engagement in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person (Article.36), forced marriage (Article.37) and forced abortion and forced sterilisation (Article.39)¹⁵⁸. In addition, it includes a set of multidisciplinary measures to prevent violence, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators with the help of shelters, hotlines, and comprehensive support for victims of sexual violence.

Beyond these concrete measures, it firmly affirms that violence against women is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. The Convention also established a legal framework at the pan-European level, including the Group of Experts on Action to Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), responsible for overseeing the Convention’s implementation. The States Parties elect its members.

The Istanbul Convention has already had a tangible impact on the lives of women and girls in Europe. It has contributed to raising awareness of gender-based and sexual violence and developing more ambitious legislative arsenals in national laws. In addition, it has increased the training of legal

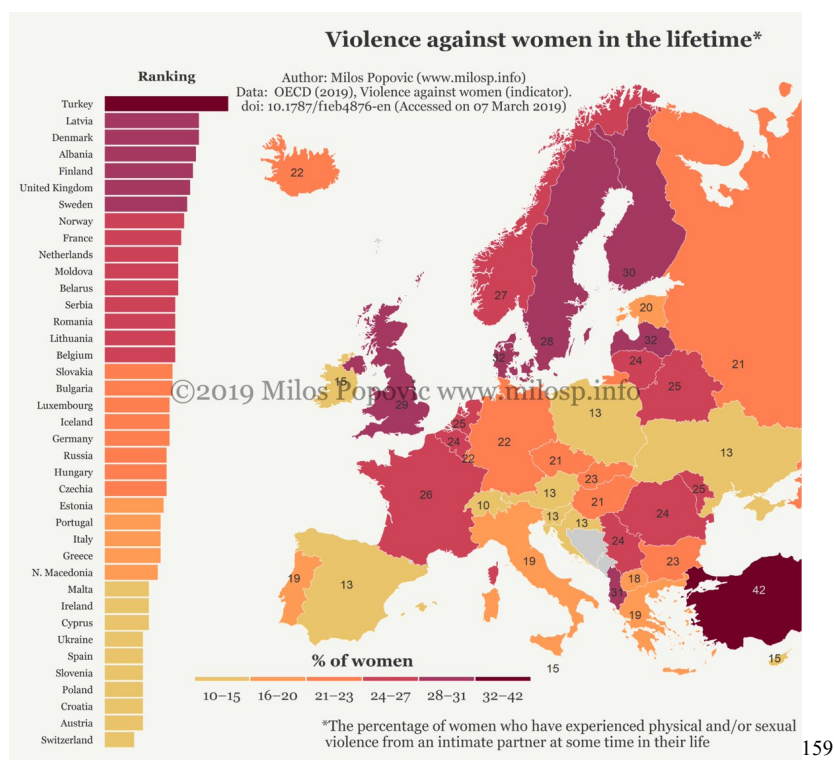
¹⁵⁵ Council of Europe, Historical background. Available from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/historical-background>

¹⁵⁶ Istanbul Convention Factsheet, Council of Europe. Available from <https://rm.coe.int/istanbul-convention-factsheet/168078ec5c>

¹⁵⁷ Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210, *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Istanbul, 11.V.2011

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*

and health professionals as well as law enforcement officers - a crucial step in removing barriers to access to justice for women victims of violence.



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Every woman and every girl has the right to a life free from violence. The fight against all forms of its forms, especially gender-based and sexual violence, is non-negotiable. The protection of victims of abuse is not a controversial issue. Yet, since its conception, the Convention has been subject to an unprecedented campaign of misinformation and misinterpretation. Its opponents have attacked the definition of gender as a social construction. More worryingly, opposition to the Convention is also coming from some European governments and parliamentarians, leading to the blocking of ratification by some countries and consequently by the European Union.

However, in recent weeks, it is from its birthplace and first signatory, Turkey, that the Convention has been challenged. Last 20 March, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took the unilateral decision to withdraw his country from the treaty. It shocked many Turkish women who took to the streets in their thousands and the international community.

Poland is following the same path as it opposes LGBT+ rights. Ratified in 2015 before the conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS) came to power, the Istanbul Convention is considered by the Polish minister for justice, Zbigniew Ziobro, as “a feminist creation that aims to justify gay ideology”¹⁶⁰. The latter said that Poland could, independently of this Convention, effectively protect women against violence. It might be its idea, but it has nothing to do with reality, as seen in the data below.

¹⁵⁹ Milos Popovic, *Violence against women in the lifetime*, Data OECD 2019. Available from <http://www.milosp.info>

¹⁶⁰ Giulia Siviero, *Quelli contro la Convenzione di Istanbul*, Il Post, 29 April 2021. Available from <https://www.ilpost.it/2021/04/29/convenzione-istanbul-polonia/>



Source: European Commission: Data from 2016

In that context, even if the 27 EU member States + the UK have signed the treaty, challenges related to its ratification persist in Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom.

As far as Italy and France are concerned, both have signed and ratified the Convention in 2014 and have put into action the measures indicated in the treaty to help the victims and punish the perpetrators. Unfortunately though, many women still die from those personal abuse.

By 2020 in France, 90 women had been killed by their partners or ex-husbands, a sharp drop from the 146 femicides¹⁶¹ recorded by the government in 2019. In Italy, the number of women victims of voluntary homicide in 2020 was 112, 111 in 2019.¹⁶²

V. 2. Female Genitals’ mutilation – Al Shabaab terrorism and sexual violence

The Istanbul Convention also deals with Female Genital Mutilation in its Article 38. Thanks to important agencies of the United Nations such as HRW, WHO, FGM/C is not only recognised internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, but it is also a violation of the rights of children as this terrible practice is usually perpetrated against little girls from 4 to 12 years old, and sometimes even older. We must consider that more than 140 million women and girls must endure genital mutilation every year globally. With the high number of immigrants coming from countries where FGM does exist, Europe is also confronted with those tortures.

When dealing with FGM, the World Health Organization classifies it into four major types:

“Type 1: this is the partial or total removal of the clitoral glans (the external and visible part of the clitoris, which is a sensitive part of the female genitals), and/or the prepuce/ clitoral hood (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoral glans).

¹⁶¹ Salomé Gegout, *90 féminicides en 2020 : ce que les chiffres ne disent pas*, 02/2021. Available from <https://www.journaldesfemmes.fr/societe/actu/2693485-feminicides-2020-chiffres-violence-conjugale-femmes-tuees-conjoint-mort/>

¹⁶² Laura Biarelli, *Femminicidio, in Italia le vittime nel 2020 sono state 112*. 03/2021. Available from <https://www.altalex.com/documents/news/2021/03/26/femminicidio-in-italia-vittime-nel-2020-sono-state-112>

Type 2: this is the partial or total removal of the clitoral glans and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without removal of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).

Type 3: Also known as infibulation, this is narrowing the vaginal opening by creating a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removing the clitoral prepuce/clitoral hood and glans (Type I FGM).

Type 4: This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, and cauterizing the genital area.

Deinfibulation refers to the practice of cutting open the sealed vaginal opening of a woman who has been infibulated, which is often necessary for improving health and well-being as well as to allow intercourse or to facilitate childbirth.”

Somalia ranks first in the world in terms of FGM prevalence with a rate of 98%. This practice is very firmly anchored in Somali society even though the Constitution considers it illegal. The weight of tradition is more substantial because, for many, it is a real social convention. The pressure is exercised on the mothers of young girls so that they undertake to inflict on their daughters what they themselves have undergone in the past and sometimes still undergo, as many of them, after giving birth, are sewn up again until the next baby. When one remembers that the birth rate in Somalia is more than six children per woman, one can easily imagine what these poor women have to endure.

Things are just beginning to change in Somali society, thanks to young women who have studied and decided to undertake this long journey to make people understand that these practices are torture. But, of course, the latter oppose this social pressure to conform to tradition - “your grandmother, your mother, you too did it, so if you love your daughter, you have to give her every opportunity to be accepted by the community... If you don’t, then you’ll have a guilty conscience for not having done your duty as a mother”. These are the words that they can hear if they still hesitate. And in a clan-based and patriarchal society, women have so little right to speak that they are often afraid not to act according to tradition. Type III infibulation is the most widely practised FGM in Somalia. Considering the invasive nature of this practice, women who perform it base themselves on ancestral beliefs that it guarantees the young girl’s virginity, and thus, her marital fidelity. Therefore, the young girl is more suitable for marriage and will thus be more readily accepted in the husband’s family where she will live. It is a question of honour, purity (these parts of the body are considered impure), control of female sexuality, and a transition ritual. As in all traditional communities, the cultural tradition with which infibulation is associated still makes inroads into society. Often religion is also invoked. Somali society, which is becoming increasingly Islamic, considers that the Qur’an imposes it on the followers of Mohammed. Religious support is, therefore, harmful, even if no sacred text prescribes it. Imams’ and clan leaders’ roles could help get people to abandon these practices if they clearly stated that they are of another age.

One study said that two-thirds of the young male population thought infibulation should no longer be carried out, while only 35% of women¹⁶³ thought so. However, even if Somalia is a

¹⁶³ World Bank and UNFPA, Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting in Somalia, November 2004. “In the already cited study by Health Unlimited in Mandera, Kenya, and in Borama, Northwest/Somaliland, more than two-thirds of men thought that FGM/FGC was harmful and should be abandoned, compared with 35.5 percent of women.”

patriarchal country, it is women who practice infibulation. It is always women who bring their little girls to undergo it, though they know all the terrible consequences, sufferings, and risks of dying.

Despite the efforts of civil society and the awareness of local authorities, this phenomenon has only been slowly reduced in recent years. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic has led to a resurgence of this mutilation because the girls have had less contact outside their communities.

Somalia which is often referred to as a 'nation of poets' unfortunately makes FGM a terrible inspiration source.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Ibidem, Bar Baa Igu Taala aan Weligeed Tirmayn (*I have (harbor) a mark that can never be erased*) by Halima Cali Warsame, Garowe District - Reported and Translated By: Asha Mohamud.

Toban anoon gaarin tabar weyna aan lahayn;

(Before I reached ten and was not so strong)

Tooray igu qalatay habar aan tacliin labarin;

(An old uneducated woman cut me with a knife)

Qodaxday igu taagtay hilibkay tiqtiqahayeen;

(Piercing me with thorns to tightly suture the flesh)

Tiftii Kaadida wadnaha tash layga yiri oo;

(My heart was pierced with the first drops of urine)

Bar baa igu taala aan weligeed tirmayn.

(I have a mark that can never be erased)

-//-

Markaan taaba qaaday oon taladiisa guur u kacay;

(When I grew up and prepared for marriage)

Salaanta utaagay toolmanahaan jeclaa;

(When I raised my hand to greet my handsome love)

Tacab qaadashiyo gurigii mar laysla tegay;

(When we collected our house hold goods and entered our home)

Taabashaddii horeba wadnaha tash layga yiri;

(My heart was pierced with the first touch)

Bar baa igu taala aan weligeed tirmayn.

(I have a mark that can never be erased)

-//-

Tiftii igu gorordhay tarantii Ilaah alkumay;

(When God created a life out of the few drops that managed to get in)

Talalka cudurka tiiraanyadii walaca;

(When I suffered with the morning sickness)

Markay taarikhadii dhamatay ee fooshii timi;

(When the time finished and labor came)

Tooray looqaaday hilibkii marhore la tolay;

(A knife was taken for the already sutured flesh)

Tararacidd jirka wadnaha tash layga yiri;

(My heart was pierced with the tearing skin)

Barbaa igu taala aan weligeed tirmayn

(I have a mark that can never be erased)

-//-

Towsda cudurkaasana iilkaan la tagahayaa; ee

(I will take its (FGM/FGC) consequences to the grave)

Taa nawada qaaday gabdhihiina uga tura.

(Save your girls from this that engulfed us all!)

Concerning the Shabaabs, all their activities deal with terrorism like the two devastating truck bombings which occurred on 14 October 2018¹⁶⁵ in Mogadishu and provoked a terrible carnage: 587 people were killed, 316 others were seriously injured. Many others took place in these last years, causing death and devastation. Nevertheless, beyond that dreadful violence, they practice corruption, organised crime, illicit financing, arms trafficking. They are also involved in kidnapping and trafficking of human beings. For example, children are taken from their villages or camps where their parents have found refuge after being abused or witnessing killings and are trained as child soldiers or suicide bombers.

The rapes and forced marriages orchestrated by the Shabaabs are the basis for the subjugation of the local population and the terror that accompanies it. Women and especially girls are displaced, raped as a weapon of war, and used as bargaining chips between clans. They have no opportunity to express themselves and are often too young to be able to intervene. Moreover, Somali law provides that a young girl can be married when she reaches puberty. It is, hence, very young girls who are uprooted and raped.

In addition to traditional culture and Islamic terrorism, the last three decades since the fall of the dictator Siad Barre have plunged Somalia into a continuous period of turmoil and armed conflict.

First, colonisation and civil war have exposed women to rapes from international forces and Somali men.

In 1997, the actions of the Folgore showed that Italian soldiers, as well as from other nations sent to Somalia, did not hesitate to abuse civilians. As a result, the 4th Permanent Commission¹⁶⁶ of the Italian Senate, known as the Gallo Commission, of which Tina Anselmi was a member, has carried out a *cognitive investigation into the behaviour of the Italian military contingent in Somalia in the context of the UN mission “restore hope”*. It sought to shed light on these sad episodes.¹⁶⁷

In recent years, AMISOM¹⁶⁸ has repeatedly engaged in sexual attacks on women. Until now, these forces have been composed almost exclusively of men who have not hesitated to rape Somali women with total impunity. In fact,

“Prosecuting African Union soldiers for human rights abuses or rape is impossible, as the Somali government has no jurisdiction over the troops. AMISOM forces—including their local interpreters—have complete immunity from all legal processes in Somalia. While the troop-contributing countries exercise jurisdiction over their troops for any criminal offenses committed in

¹⁶⁵ Maruf, H. *Somalia Marks One Year After Deadliest Terrorist Attack*, 10/2018. Available from <https://www.voanews.com/africa/somalia-marks-one-year-after-deadliest-terrorist-attack>.

¹⁶⁶ Senato della Repubblica, XIII legislatura, 4^a Commissione Permanente (difesa), *Indagine conoscitiva sul comportamento del contingente militare italiano in Somalia nell'ambito della missione ONU «RESTORE HOPE»*, 10° Resoconto stenografico, Seduta di mercoledì 19 maggio 1999.

Available from <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/DF/16681.pdf>

¹⁶⁷ *la Repubblica_fatti_Violenze in Somalia accusate ai comandi.pdf*, 1998.

Available from <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/>

¹⁶⁸ African Union Mission in Somalia AMISOM is a peacemaking mission in Somalia. Contingents from other African countries such as Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Djibouti are present on the Somali soil to help the current government implement the transition to greater security in the country, but also to a fair distribution of food and health aid and the fight against armed groups and Al Shabaab. The African Union organises all this under the aegis of the United Nations.

*Somalia, allegations of rape and sexual exploitation AMISOM soldiers are rarely investigated and seldom prosecuted.*¹⁶⁹

Furthermore, Police and Somali militias who roam the neighbourhoods of major cities to ensure the safety of those who can afford them often get involved in gang rapes, as HRW titled it in a report, “*Here, Rape is Normal: A Five-Point Plan to Curtail Sexual Violence in Somalia.*”¹⁷⁰ The INGO has attempted to provide a roadmap for the government and its international donors to drastically reduce violence against women. The report highlights the preparedness of medical personnel and health services to provide immediate care to victims and the need to take drastic measures at the judicial, legal and political levels to stop these crimes.

On 26 November 2016, a UNWOMEN Somalia symposium for the elimination of violence against women was held to mark “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” in Mogadishu. These are annual programs that should help women all over the world. Somali women rights activists, youth activists, the Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (DSRCC) for Somalia, anti-FGM campaigners attended it. They discussed these cruel assaults and how to stop them. In a society that is failing, women are dramatically exposed.

V. 3. The #MeToo Movement has spread all over the world

People usually know about the #MeToo movement because it comes from a social movement that started in the United States in October 2017 with the Weinstein scandal. It is indeed partly true. Harvey Weinstein was until then an important movie producer who was powerful in the Hollywood business. Many actresses began accusing him of sexual assaults and even rapes. One of them, Alyssa Milano, encouraged all the women who had suffered his deviant behaviours to spread the word and denounce the “casting couch” practices by sending a message on Twitter with the hashtag Me Too. Many actresses (and especially famous ones), female authors, and journalists did talk. What is generally unknown is that the “Me Too” movement existed years before.

Tarana Burke is an American activist who has been fighting for black women who have experienced sexual violence and abuse, for thirty years. She was a victim of this violence herself and decided that silence should stop. That is why she organised a protest campaign called Me Too in 2007 to denounce these acts and seek to improve all actions supporting the victims. Her movement found itself on the front pages of the newspapers and took on an international dimension with the Weinstein case.

The campaign has spread very quickly. What seemed at first to be a typically American case in the world of entertainment and cinema has turned out to affect all spheres of women’s daily lives worldwide: from work to leisure, from school to family. Indeed, sexual harassment of women does not stop in Hollywood; it spares no social class, no environment, no country.

The #MeToo movement has become global, although there have been local variations of the hashtag, depending on language and culture, like #BalanceTonPorc in France and #QuellaVoltaChe in Italy.

¹⁶⁹ Faraah Adan, *For AMISOM, Somali Women are Spoils of War*, World News, December 2017.

Available from <https://intpolicydigest.org/for-amisom-somali-women-are-spoils-of-war/>

¹⁷⁰ HRW REPORT, “*Here, Rape is Normal*”, *A Five-Point Plan to Curtail Sexual Violence in Somalia*, February 13, 2014.

Available from www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/13/here-rape-normal/five-point-plan-curtail-sexual-violence-somalia

Journalist Sandra Muller, who created the French slogan: BalanceTonPorc - literally *Throw your pig out* - encouraged women to speak out. After revealing the name of the man who had offended her, she denounced him publicly - because the slogan spirit includes naming the alleged attackers - as the journalist had instructed in her first tweet. The stalker, an influential TV entrepreneur, decided to file a defamation suit against his accuser. Two years after the Tweet, Sandra Muller was convicted and ordered to pay 15,000 euros in damages to the person she had named. The appeal of the judgment overturned the first sentence of the Court. It stated that the incriminating remarks were indeed aimed at denouncing certain men's sexual and non-consensual behaviour towards women, so that these physical or verbal assaults, which have long been tolerated or passed over in silence, are widely known and cannot be perpetuated.

“The #balancetonporc and #metoo movements have been widely followed and have helped to free women's speech positively; their limit is obviously that they do not denounce men indiscriminately on social networks by making false accusations against them. However, subject to this reservation, the call to denounce these sexual or sexist assaults, which is not to be confused with denunciation inspired by despicable motives, remains legitimate.”¹⁷¹

In Italy, Giulia Blasi, another journalist, decided to coin the hashtag #Quellavoltache on Twitter. Riding the wave of American denunciations, Italian women have also begun to talk about their traumatic experiences, ranging from heavy dating to rape. However, the significant American participation did not have the same impact in Italy. Probably, because the testimonials were often criticised for their past, and perhaps because Italians saw the movement as being too connected to the world of entertainment and, therefore, far removed from personal concerns. Moreover, many Italian women still think that denouncing does not change behaviour but rather exacerbates it.

As far as Somali women are concerned, the movement that had previously been accused of being elitist, urban, and white is changing shape to include more significant experiences of abuse and harassment. Four years after the #MeToo campaign, those stories of sexual assaults are brought into the public eye, and women from traditionalist black communities are also getting into the fray.

Dozens of Somali women in the diaspora, in the US, in England have broken the silence and shared their stories of rape, sexual assault by family members and strangers. In these communities, every man has an untouchable authority. In the past, expressing themselves exposed them to further abuse and trauma, but now a growing culture of belief surrounds them with much-needed protection. It offers them a shield of anonymity and collective support.

Unfortunately, those who have remained in Somalia have far fewer opportunities to make their voices heard. It would take much more than a movement to make a difference, but it might be a beginning.

As French ethnologist Françoise Héritier said: *“the consequences of this movement can be enormous. Provided we lift not one corner but the full veil, pull out all the threads to rethink the*

¹⁷¹ COUR D'APPEL DE PARIS - Pôle 2 - Chambre 7- ARRÊT DU 31 MARS 2021 (n° 6/2021), *“Les mouvements #balancetonporc et #metoo ont été très suivis, ont été salués par diverses autorités ou personnalités et ont contribué à libérer la parole des femmes de façon positive, leur limite étant évidemment que celles-ci ne dénoncent pas des hommes inconsidérément sur les réseaux sociaux en proférant des accusations mensongères à leur égard. Sous cette réserve, insiste la cour, l'appel à la dénonciation de ces agressions sexuelles ou sexistes – qui ne se confond pas avec la délation, inspirée par des motifs méprisables – demeure légitime”*. (Translation made by myself). Available from https://www.leclubdesjuristes.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Cour-dappel-de-Paris_31-mars-2021_Muller-Brion.pdf

*question of the relationship between the sexes, attack the status of male domination and destroy the idea of irrepressible male desire. It is a gigantic task”.*¹⁷²

The fact is that #MeToo has made it possible to move the lines. In addition to raising awareness and galvanising some physical rallies, the movement has brought the issue of sexual harassment and violence against women to many tables: in the public and political sphere, within companies, in schools, and within couples.

Violence is intolerable, whether physical or verbal and taking advantage of a dominant position in society to obtain sexual favours is abhorrent. Living with respect should not be such a difficult thing to understand. Women are certainly not the men’s enemies, but they should not be forced to put up with aggression. Fighting against the ignorance of some is definitely complicated.

V. 4. Abortion right: a fragile right

Rights should be rights. Here again, it seems that the struggles made years ago that led to fundamental changes in society are never definitive.

As said before, abortion was authorised by the 1975 Veil law in France. However, the French Parliament definitively adopted the offence of obstruction to abortion on 15 February 2017¹⁷³: this law attacks “disinformation” websites on abortion, which act to dissuade or intentionally mislead women who wish to obtain information on abortion.

Since the Veil law was passed, there have been many demonstrations against abortion, especially in the years following its enactment and into the 1990s. Mostly Catholic associations went to the centres where abortion was performed and sought to dissuade women from terminating their pregnancies, by talking to them or assaulting them and the medical staff who accompanied them in this ordeal.

The “anti-abortion commandos” aimed to obstruct the functioning of medical facilities which provided abortion in France, between 1987 and 1995. They did not hesitate to break or destroy the premises where abortions were performed. The blocking of those facilities was inspired by Operation Rescue’s US campaign.

Since 2005, an annual event called the ‘March for Life’ has been organised. It brings together thousands of people to demonstrate the end of abortion. Its organisers recruit members and volunteers to go and proselytise throughout the year.

Italy is also marked by the arrival of increasingly extremist organisations, such as ProVita which has very close links with the neo-fascists of Forza Nuova, in the last two decades. Three years

¹⁷² Annick Cojean, Françoise Héritier : « Il faut anéantir l’idée d’un désir masculin irrépressible », Le Monde, Novembre 2017. “Les conséquences de ce mouvement peuvent être énormes. À condition de soulever non pas un coin mais l’intégralité du voile, de tirer tous les fils pour repenser la question du rapport entre les sexes, s’attaquer à ce statut de domination masculine et anéantir l’idée d’un désir masculin irrépressible. C’est un gigantesque chantier.” (Translation made by myself). Available from https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2017/11/05/francoise-heritier-j-ai-toujours-dit-a-mes-etudiantes-osez-foncez_5210397_3224.html

¹⁷³ Law No. 2017-347 of 20 March 2017 on the extension of the offence of obstructing the voluntary termination of pregnancy, Official Journal of 21 March 2017. Available from https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/dossiers/extension_delit_entrave_ivg.asp

ago, another anti-abortion movement named CitizenGo, multiplied its spectacular communication operations with giant posters in Rome, claiming that the first femicides are due to abortion.

In the political arena, challenging the right to abortion was not a significant issue until 2015/2016 with the organisation of Family Days, that is to say, several demonstrations organised, mainly in Italy, by Catholic groups and associations in opposition to the extension of rights to same-sex couples and abortion practices.

In 2018, the Family Day took place in Verona, and Senator Simone Pillon from the Lega party announced the future possibility of amending the law on voluntary interruption of pregnancy. He declared, *“When the numbers are available in Parliament, the law will have to be amended. In the meantime, the first part of the 194 must be applied, aiming at zero terminations of pregnancy. It is necessary to “support motherhood; otherwise, in 2050, we will die out as Italians”*¹⁷⁴.

However, for women’s rights groups, the most urgent danger lies elsewhere, within the medical profession itself. Indeed, Law 194 passed in May 1978 in a country still dominated by the Christian Democracy, provided a mechanism allowing practitioners to raise a conscientious objection not to perform a medical act contrary to their opinions. Doctors may indeed appeal to the “conscience clause”, which authorises them not to perform any act that may offend their ethical, moral, and religious convictions.

While the average rate of conscientious objectors in Europe is 10%, in Italy in 2016, it represented 71% of practitioners and even 79% in the region of Rome (Lazio). As a result, there are between 12,000 and 15,000 clandestine abortions per year in the country, according to the government. NGOs put the figure at 50,000¹⁷⁵.

For Somalia, abortion is allowed but under very restrictive conditions. In the country, it is only available in cases of danger to the life of the mother. Somali women are, as already mentioned, among the most prolific in the world. With just over six children per woman and a very high infant mortality rate, they do not even conceive the idea of abortion. Islam does not allow it, and the country is increasingly observant.

The right to abortion remains a vulnerable right, regularly called into question, and access to which is still fraught with difficulties.

V. 5. Major awareness of men, especially in Europe

Being a woman in our modern societies is not always easy. Daily life is full of obligations and expectations. I remember an entry I saw on the Internet where it said: “Woman, the original multitasking system.” It is definitely right, but only because there is no other choice.

Women in their daily lives must be able to achieve an incredible amount of activities. They work and concentrate on projects, adjust appointments, meet colleagues, shop, cook, take care of the children, drive them to school and activities and monitor schoolwork, accompany them to the physician, be a nurse for them and a doctor, “take care” of the partner, plan daily expenses, clean the

¹⁷⁴REDAZIONE IL FATTO QUOTIDIANO, *Legge 194, il senatore della Lega Pillon: “Via l’aborto, prima o poi in Italia faremo come in Argentina”*, 13 agosto 2018

¹⁷⁵Agnès FAURE, *Le droit à l’avortement dans l’Union européenne*.

Available from <https://www.touteurope.eu/societe /le-droit-a-l-avortement-dans-l-union-europeenne>

house, take care of the elderly parents, etc... The issue is not that women can do this because they have been “programmed”; it is simply necessary, and if they don’t do it, no one will do it for them.

The proof was provided by a young British woman, mother of three, who last March decided to go on a housework strike without telling anyone in the household. It took the husband and three children more than three days to realise that something was wrong and, having run out of dishes, food, toilet paper, and the like, on the fourth day, they started to roll up their sleeves and do what this young woman does every day, without anyone really noticing. A sociological experiment, as she called it on Twitter, updated with photos and comments.

Men have understood in recent years that the status of women must change. Many of them in developed countries are also taking care of their families and household duties, realising that this is a normal part of their lives and indeed not the exclusive domain of women.

An interesting aspect is seen in commercials. Men are increasingly seen advertising household products with their children in their arms and carrying on a conversation with their wives. It’s not a revolution, but it’s a sign of the times.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot to do; According to the European Commission, there is a much larger share of women doing childcare than men for all Member States. For example, in the EU in 2016, 93 % of women aged 25 to 49 (with children under 18) took care of their children daily, compared with 69 % of men. Among the Member States, Italy and France were almost at the same level, in Italy (97 % of women and 73 % of men) and France (93 % and 74 %).

For housework and cooking, the differences were even more significant. In the EU in 2016, 78 % of women cooked and/or did housework daily, compared with 32 % of men. In both our countries, we can notice that in Italy, there were (81 % of women and 20 % of men) and in France (80 % of women and 36 % of men) who got involved in the household.¹⁷⁶

It takes time for mentalities to change, but parents must also learn not to make differences between their children: boys or girls, they must help in the same way at home. It is a question of education that makes children understand from a very young age there is no gender distinction in the family. And if there is none in the family, then there should be none outside either.

Conclusion

The journey we undertook in this thesis showed us how different and at the same time similar, the status of women can be, depending on whether you live in Europe or Africa, especially in Somalia, one of the poorest countries in the world.

For years, Italian, French and Somali women have struggled for their rights. Their status has been the subject of numerous research, studies and analyses since the beginning of the last century. The basic reason for this is that although women represent half of humanity, they have always had a great difficulty in being recognised, respected, and listened to. The past centuries have not been very kind to them.

¹⁷⁶ The life of women and men in Europe A STATISTICAL PORTRAIT 2020 edition.

Available from: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-interactive-publications/-/ks-04-20-395>

We have seen that the lack of means, and even extreme poverty make all the rights acquired over time and struggles in Europe waver. Mentalities are extremely difficult to change, and when a patriarchal society and the Islamic religion get involved, women are even more at risk than before.

A true equality in all sectors is still a distant reality for women everywhere in the world, in Europe and abroad. Still, it is certain that in order to make it a primary objective, it is essential to start with the political class. We must demand that the latter be a faithful representation of our society, which is profoundly diverse and multiform. It is compulsory to implement strong and effective measures that can reduce the gender gap at any level of the society and give women the opportunity to break through the glass ceiling and advance in their careers, free from the burden of discrimination, being able to make choices for oneself without giving up a fulfilling life just like the generation of the '70s did.

If power relations between men and women remain unbalanced and women are not 'allowed' to actively participate in decision-making, the global community will not be able to meet the great challenges ahead. Electoral gender quotas can work. In many states, they have helped accustomed people to see more female faces in positions of power. However, subverting entrenched cultural norms so that today's society becomes fair and respectful of diversity must be the primary goal of any democracy.

Nevertheless, opposing equality to merit is absolutely unfair and fallacious. Perhaps the only way to make meaningful progress is to accept some compromises: gender quotas are not the definitive solution for equality. Nevertheless, they are tools from which one should not necessarily expect more than what they mechanically allow but whose symbolic effects are potentially substantial and may eliminate a few distortions of an imperfect society. However, if they are used well today, they will not be necessary tomorrow, when it will no longer surprise anyone to see women on boards of directors, as heads of political parties, or heads of state, and astronauts.

Although women are still paid less than men, the European Union has launched an action plan to reduce these inequalities. The European body represents an opportunity to reverse the situation. It is fully committed to eliminating inequalities and struggles to reinforce a normal and civil way of living, by repudiating the plague of violence and trying to push the still reluctant European countries to finally ratify the Istanbul Convention. This is not a simple matter for countries governed by nationalist parties.

In the ideal and concretely democratic and fair society in which there may be hope to live one day, there will be no institutional positions that a woman will not have occupied;

Young women will not stop pursuing their most ambitious dreams and will do their utmost to achieve their goals because no political or professional reality will be inaccessible. This society will give girls, as well as boys, the certainty that there are no careers they cannot aspire to, no jobs that are too difficult to fill, and will ensure that competence and determination are the only criteria that deserve to be taken into account when choosing tomorrow's leaders.

Let me express one last very personal wish, that one day Somalia may also rise from its ashes and present to its people a more humane face that welcomes and helps its women without mutilating or assaulting them.

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Sintesi

Questa tesi rientra nel campo di ricerca della sociologia politica e riguarda specificamente la condizione delle donne in tre diversi paesi: Italia, Francia e Somalia. Queste realtà sono così diverse che sembra abbastanza difficile confrontarle, ma se si osservano più da vicino, è possibile trovare molti aspetti in comune: innanzitutto, perché sono state collegate attraverso la storia.

Considereremo quindi, nel primo capitolo, la condizione femminile da un punto di vista storico, soprattutto nel XVIII secolo con alcune delle pioniere della lotta femminile e il contesto in cui vivevano ma anche la disuguaglianza che le donne dovettero affrontare con il Codice Napoleonico e la sua chiusura amministrativa. Un secondo capitolo prenderà in considerazione il tema dei diritti fondamentali e la possibilità per le donne di esprimersi in modo più completo e universale. Nel terzo capitolo si analizzerà la rappresentatività delle donne in politica e il modo in cui potrebbero fare la differenza se la loro voce fosse ascoltata. Il quarto capitolo sarà dedicato alle difficoltà economiche che le donne devono affrontare, in particolare al 'Gender Pay gap', ma anche alla povertà. Infine, la quinta parte tratterà, da un lato, della violenza che le donne subiscono sia in Europa che in Africa e dall'altro, della consapevolezza di molti uomini che hanno imparato cosa significa l'uguaglianza e che lottano con le donne per affermarla nella società civile.

I. Punto di vista storico

Come diceva Simone de Beauvoir, "On ne naît pas femme, on le devient", cioè "Non si nasce, ma si diventa donna". La società ha modellato il comportamento delle donne, dando loro un ruolo preciso con diritti specifici, mai così completi come possono essere quelli maschili. Possiamo sempre dire che abbiamo raggiunto definitivamente l'uguaglianza, ma siamo davvero sicuri che sia vero?

Gli anni e le epoche sono passati e hanno lasciato il posto a una consapevolezza diversa. Certo, si doveva cercare l'erudizione, ma insieme a questa capacità, un'idea di trasformazione della società, della visione della donna all'interno di un mondo ancora molto maschile. Due donne si sono distinte in due paesi diversi, confinanti tra loro e molto simili. Giuseppa Eleonora Barbapiccola, conosciuta anche come "la bella cartesiana di Napoli", è stata una filosofa illuminista e una traduttrice della prima metà del XVIII secolo. Nacque nel 1702 a Salerno e affermò il diritto delle donne a trovare un posto nel dibattito filosofico allora dominato dagli uomini; Olympe de Gouges che denunciò l'esclusione delle donne dalla Dichiarazione dei diritti dell'uomo e del cittadino. Nel 1791, pubblicò la propria Dichiarazione dei diritti della donna e del cittadino, che indirizzò direttamente a Maria Antonietta. Lì affermò l'uguaglianza dei diritti civili e politici per entrambi i sessi, insistendo che alle donne fossero restituiti i diritti naturali che la forza del pregiudizio aveva loro tolto. Fu ghigliottinata il 3 novembre 1793.

Per le femministe, la nozione di maggioranza non può procedere senza una riflessione sulla sua dimensione di genere. Le responsabilità ad essa associate, sia nella vita politica, sessuale, civile e economica, sono infatti esercitate in modo diseguale fra uomini e donne. Tra gli elementi che hanno strutturato queste disuguaglianze, il Codice Napoleonico del 1804 è regolarmente citato a proposito dei diritti civili e viene presentato nel discorso femminista attuale come un testo che riduce le donne sposate a dei minori. In effetti, un'importante serie di restrizioni all'esercizio delle loro responsabilità come adulte è stata applicata alle donne sposate e solo a loro. Bisognerà aspettare più di un secolo per modificare questi articoli e rendere alle donne una vita che non fosse succube di un uomo.

II. I diritti fondamentali

I diritti fondamentali, come le libertà civili, i diritti sociali, giuridici e politici sono importanti pilastri della democrazia. Oggi godono di una maggiore protezione. Tuttavia, non era certo il caso tra il XIX e il XX secolo. Le donne erano ancora considerate come cittadine di seconda classe perché mancava un diritto fondamentale: il diritto di voto e, quindi, di esprimersi come realmente volevano.

Il cammino è stato irto di difficoltà e soprattutto nei due paesi europei alla base della nostra ricerca. Il voto alle donne in Francia e in Italia è una conquista recente della nostra storia; in Somalia

lo è ancora di più. Infatti, per essere cittadine a pieno titolo, le donne francesi, italiane e somale sono dovute essere pazienti e perseveranti.

Sia l'Italia che la Francia hanno potuto esercitare il loro diritto alla fine della seconda guerra mondiale. Il suffragio universale è stato accordato in Francia nel mese di marzo 1944 e veramente esercitato nel 1945. Un anno dopo, anche le Italiane hanno potuto recarsi alle urne e hanno votato per la prima volta per il Referendum istituzionale che ha portato l'Italia a scegliere la repubblica.

La situazione della Somalia è diversa dato che all'epoca, il paese era ancora sotto dominio italiano e inglese. Il suo cammino verso la decolonizzazione ha avuto luogo già dal 1947 dopo la firma del Trattato di Pace di Parigi. Poi nel 1950, quando le Nazioni Unite hanno dato all'Italia la possibilità di stabilire un'amministrazione fiduciaria per portare il paese verso l'indipendenza 10 anni più tardi, il 1 luglio 1960. Il suffragio sia per gli uomini che per le donne somale era il tributo che la decolonizzazione accordava al Paese che stava entrando nei suoi primi anni di indipendenza con un numero molto limitato di infrastrutture e istituzioni. Poche persone erano state formate per gestire l'amministrazione. I clan, tradizionali divisioni patriarcali all'interno della società, presero rapidamente il controllo di questa struttura istituzionale.

Al fine di superare le limitazioni imposte dalle società a guida maschile, le donne hanno dovuto unirsi per ottenere rispetto. Non è stato facile e non lo è tuttora, ma le associazioni create o rafforzate tra il 1970 e il 1980 hanno permesso di imporre una visione femminile che fino ad allora non era stata presa in considerazione.

Il MLF in Francia era un tipo di movimento radicalmente nuovo, che si inventava nell'incontro delle donne senza pretendere di rappresentarle e rifiutava di essere rappresentato da qualcuno. Nessuno doveva appropriarsi del nome collettivo. Molti erano i gruppuscoli che lo formarono. Nonostante le loro differenze strategiche e politiche, i gruppi si riunirono intorno al diritto all'aborto, alla liberazione del corpo o contro la violenza coniugale, dando un vero impulso al progetto rivoluzionario del MLF.

La lotta per la liberalizzazione dell'aborto fu sicuramente la sua più importante realizzazione quando all'epoca, le donne morivano o rimanevano ferite a vita da aborti clandestini. Simone de Beauvoir, insieme ad altre femministe, denunciò nel *Manifesto delle 343*, l'ipocrisia che regnava nel paese sull'argomento. Questa lista si componeva dei nomi di donne famose e non che dichiaravano di aver subito un aborto clandestino. La vicenda diede luogo ad un grande dibattito aperto in seno alla popolazione francese e portò nel 1974, il nuovo Presidente della Repubblica Valéry Giscard D'Estaing ad incaricare Simone Veil, appena nominata Ministro della Salute, di questo dossier scottante. La legge sull'aborto fu promulgata il 17 gennaio 1975.

In Italia, il movimento femminista fu più politicizzato. Come il suo alter ego francese, i temi dominanti erano l'aborto, l'oppressione femminile, l'attenzione al corpo e alla sessualità, nodi essenziali, si diceva, della subordinazione delle donne. Fin dall'inizio, le femministe si sono battute contro i ruoli sessuali, a partire dal rifiuto della sessualità finalizzata alla riproduzione.

Tuttavia, la vicinanza del Vaticano, sia geograficamente che ideologicamente, ha rallentato la lotta per l'emancipazione femminile molto più che in altri paesi, poiché le forze politiche cattoliche erano ancora molto potenti nella penisola durante gli anni '60 e '70.

Fondato nel 1970 e federato con il Partito Radicale, il MLD era nel cuore dell'area liberale. Giocò un ruolo centrale nelle grandi battaglie femministe degli anni '70. Non bisogna dimenticare che la società italiana dell'epoca era ancora molto tradizionalista, più di quella francese. Il modello era di tipo patriarcale, esteso su tutta la penisola, e la legislazione riguardante le donne era molto conservatrice. Solo nel 1975 fu abrogato il delitto d'onore. Il percorso verso la legalizzazione dell'aborto fu lungo ma avvenne infine il 22 maggio 1978 con la legge 194.

A migliaia di chilometri dall'Europa, il 15 ottobre 1969, il Generale Siad Barre prese il potere in Somalia dopo poco più di 9 anni di indipendenza. Con lui molte cose cambiarono, soprattutto sulla carta. Militare, volle imporre il socialismo scientifico. Stabilì il suo potere in modo autoritario e chiunque fosse contro la sua ideologia o fosse un avversario politico veniva imprigionato o rimosso definitivamente. Tuttavia, sotto Siad Barre, la maggior parte delle ragazze andò a scuola e le donne

trovarono più facilmente lavoro. Pertanto, la partecipazione delle donne alla politica e all'esercito aumentò durante gli anni '70 e '80. Infatti, come marxista, la sua ideologia considerava utile che le donne avessero gli stessi diritti degli uomini.

La legge sulla famiglia del 1975 diede uguali diritti a uomini e donne per quanto riguarda il matrimonio, il divorzio e l'eredità dei beni e limitò la poligamia. In quest'ottica, le prime donne più emancipate in Somalia poterono unirsi nel 1971 in gruppi che facevano parte dell'apparato del governo. E l'8 marzo 1977 nacque la SWDO, come sezione femminile dell'ufficio politico della Presidenza. Le donne cominciarono a farsi riconoscere per la protezione dei bambini e della salute con la costruzione di scuole, ospedali, piccoli alberghi, strade, vie di comunicazione per facilitare il dialogo e la comunicazione da una parte all'altra del paese. Fu introdotto il servizio militare obbligatorio per uomini e donne con un diploma di scuola superiore. L'uguaglianza assoluta, però, non si è verificata. In primo luogo, perché l'accesso all'istruzione era principalmente una questione maschile e la struttura clanica della società somala era troppo patriarcale per accettare che le donne potessero avere le capacità per governare.

III. Donne e politica

La lotta delle donne per la rappresentanza politica è sempre stata ardua. Tuttavia, poiché la morale è cambiata, il secolo scorso ha permesso a molte di loro di irrompere finalmente nel dominio maschile.

L'Italia ha subito veri e propri sconvolgimenti nel XX secolo. Dopo la prima guerra mondiale, il paese era in una grave crisi economica. I lavoratori scioperarono per ottenere salari più alti e manifestarono per ottenere migliori condizioni di lavoro. Le donne in questo contesto avevano pochissimo spazio per esprimersi ed erano letteralmente schiacciate dall'ambiente circostante. Alcune però ci riuscirono, tra cui Nilde Iotti e Tina Anselmi.

Leonilde Iotti è stata la prima donna a diventare Presidente della Camera dei Deputati, dal 1979 al 1992, la terza carica più alta dello Stato, un record. Infatti, è conosciuta ancora oggi per essere stata deputata ininterrottamente dalla prima alla tredicesima legislatura (1948-1999). Nel 1942, entrò nella Resistenza, collaborando con le bande partigiane che combattevano contro i nazifascisti e divenne ben presto una staffetta partigiana. Prese parte attiva nella lotta di liberazione attraverso i gruppi di difesa delle donne e fu eletta deputata nelle liste del partito comunista, il 2 giugno 1946, a 26 anni. Durante i lavori della Costituente, incontrò il leader del suo partito, Palmiro Togliatti con cui ebbe una lunga relazione fino alla morte di lui. Lei dedicò tutta la sua vita alla politica. Si è battuta per la legge sul divorzio, la legge sulla famiglia del 1975 e infine la legge sull'aborto del 1978. Lasciò la politica per ragioni di salute nel 1999 e morì lo stesso anno.

Tina Anselmi, si è laureata anche lei in lettere e ha insegnato nelle scuole elementari; ha avuto anche lei un passato di partigiana durante la seconda guerra mondiale. Ha poi insegnato, lavorato e militato in diversi sindacati, tra cui quello delle Maestre. Ha preso parte al movimento femminile della Democrazia Cristiana, partito in cui è stata eletta deputata in Parlamento per sei legislature dal 1968 al 1992. Inoltre, ha avuto importanti incarichi ministeriali come ministro della Sanità e ministro del Lavoro. E' stata anche responsabile della legge sulle pari opportunità. Ha avuto una lunga e importante carriera politica a cui ha dedicato la sua vita.

La Francia ha vissuto negli anni 30 una situazione di manifestazioni, di rifiuto dell'estrema destra che stava emergendo nel 1934, e dei progressi sociali del 1936 per i quali anche le donne fecero sentire la loro voce. Tuttavia, lo scoppio della guerra rimandò tutto alla fine del conflitto e anche oltre. Difatti è soprattutto negli anni sessanta che due donne in particolare si fanno notare.

La prima è Simone Veil. Una vita segnata ancora in giovane età dall'orrore dei campi di concentramento. Ebraica, vittima di un rastrellamento nel marzo 1944, viene deportata insieme alla sua famiglia verso il campo di concentramento di Auschwitz e poi di Bergen-Belsen. Al suo ritorno, studiò giurisprudenza e scienze politiche. Ebbe una carriera importante di alto funzionario e mise tre figli al mondo. Dagli anni 60, prese sempre più parte agli affari dello Stato, prima come consulente, e poi come segretario del CSM. Nel 1974, il neo eletto Presidente Valéry Giscard d'Estaing la chiamò

al Governo per ricoprire l'incarico di Ministro della Salute. Sarà lei a far promulgare la legge sull'aborto che tra l'altro sarà sempre conosciuta con il suo nome.

Dopo una lunga carriera in Francia, venne eletta alle elezioni europee per poi diventare Presidente del Parlamento europeo il 17 luglio 1979. Continuando una carriera a dir poco spettacolare, fu anche eletta tra gli 'Immortali' dell'Académie Française nel 2008 e ricevette l'approbazione definitiva del Presidente della Repubblica, nel 2010. Simone Veil morì nel 2017 a Parigi dopo una vita incredibilmente ricca di lotte e riconosciuta da tutti, in Francia, in Europa e nel mondo intero. Il 1° luglio 2018, Simone Veil è diventata la quinta donna ad essere inumata al Pantheon in una commovente cerimonia. È sepolta lì con suo marito.

Yvette Roudy, è sempre stata femminista. Militò per un gruppo di sinistra non comunista, il "Mouvement Démocratique Féminin" (Movimento Democratico delle Donne) nel 1962. Fondò un giornale il cui tema principale erano le donne. Ma si rese conto che per far muovere le cose, bisognava entrare in politica. Ed quel che fece. Fu eletta al Parlamento europeo nel 1979 nelle liste del Partito socialista (PS), poi fu nominata Ministro dei Diritti della Donna (maggio 1981- 1986) durante il primo settennato di François Mitterrand. Femminista e firmataria del *Manifesto delle 343*, è all'origine di due leggi che portano il suo nome: la legge Roudy sull'aborto: la legge sui rimborsi del 31 dicembre 1982, e la legge Roudy per la parità, una legge sulla "parità degli uomini e delle donne che lavorano nelle imprese" del 13 luglio 1983. Yvette Roudy si è sempre impegnata per la parità.

Altre donne in un paese decisamente lontano si sono illustrate per le loro convinzioni e voglia di migliorare la propria nazione; è il caso di Edna Adan. Edna è nata a Hargeisa, figlia di un medico somalo, si è formata come infermiera nel Regno Unito al Borough Polytechnic Institute, ora South Bank University di Londra, dove si dice sia stata "la prima giovane donna somala a studiare in Gran Bretagna". Negli anni '70, ha lavorato per il Ministero della Sanità somalo e poi come delegata all'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità (OMS), facendo una campagna contro le mutilazioni genitali femminili. A metà degli anni '80, ha iniziato a costruire un ospedale a Mogadiscio. Tuttavia, prima che fosse completato, iniziò la guerra civile somala che la costrinse a lasciare il paese. Rentrò nell'OMS come consulente tecnico nel 1986. Poi tornò in Somaliland e costruì da zero un ospedale a Hargeisa, che poi gestisce ancora oggi. L'ospedale di maternità 'Edna Adan', ha aperto ufficialmente il 9 marzo 2002. Da quella data, oltre 1.000 professionisti della salute sono stati formati attraverso il suo progetto. Tuttavia, Edna Adan ha anche capito che quando qualcuno vuole fare dei cambiamenti dall'interno di un paese, è necessario essere coinvolti nella politica. Così si è candidata alle elezioni ed è stata eletta. È diventata l'unico ministro donna nel governo del Somaliland fino al luglio 2006.

Fawsia Yusuf Haji Adam è conosciuta come la 'Lady di ferro' somala e attualmente, è presidente del Partito Democratico Nazionale e del partito HIIGSI Puntland State of Somalia, una coalizione di 10 partiti politici nel Paese. Fawsia è una figura emblematica sulla scena politica somala. La sua influenza risiede nel fatto che è stata la prima donna ad essere nominata vice Primo ministro della Somalia e ministro degli Esteri nel 2012. Ha dimostrato che una donna in un paese islamico può fare bene quanto un uomo e anche meglio di un uomo.

Le organizzazioni femministe hanno ripreso tardivamente la causa della rappresentanza politica delle donne. È diventata una priorità solo negli anni '90, dopo che diverse richieste in ambito privato e professionale erano state soddisfatte. In Francia, nel 1999, è stata adottata una riforma costituzionale che ha permesso di stabilire delle quote per le donne. Due leggi del 2000 e del 2007 completano questo sistema. La legge per promuovere la parità di accesso di donne e uomini ai mandati elettorali e alle funzioni elettive è stata promulgata il 6 giugno 2000. L'alternanza era rigorosa per le elezioni a un turno. Per le elezioni parlamentari, la legge prevedeva l'uguaglianza facoltativa: i partiti che non presentavano il 50% di candidati di ciascun sesso dovevano pagare una multa (la sanzione è, infatti, detratta dalla prima parte del finanziamento pubblico).

Nel contesto italiano, dopo un percorso durato quasi due anni, la legge costituzionale n. 1 del 30 maggio 2003, art. 1, ha modificato l'articolo 51 della Costituzione. A tal fine, la Repubblica adotta misure idonee a promuovere le pari opportunità tra uomini e donne". I media hanno parlato subito di "quote rosa", mentre l'emendamento stesso non ha mai parlato di "quote rosa", ma di "pari opportunità

per uomini e donne". Si tratta di una differenza significativa. Le leggi che dovevano, quindi, essere emanate negli anni successivi si riferivano anche al genere sottorappresentato. Tuttavia, coloro che sono a favore dell'introduzione di quote per le donne ritengono che non si tratti di strumenti che vadano a scapito del merito, ma che servano a rimuovere gli ostacoli affinché le donne meritevoli abbiano la stessa opportunità di essere rappresentate nelle istituzioni.

In Somalia, la lotta delle donne sta cominciando a prendere un vero slancio positivo. È un processo lungo in una società patriarcale e tradizionale, ma i progressi sono visibili. Le pratiche e le tendenze verso una società maschile divisa in clan nelle sfere delle istituzioni statali stanno per essere invertite. La lotta per i diritti civili e politici delle donne somale ha fatto un passo avanti. Il 24 giugno 2020, la Camera dei Rappresentanti ha approvato un disegno di legge che chiede il 30% di donne in entrambi i rami del Parlamento. Da quel giorno però, il Senato non lo ha mai ratificato ed è ormai troppo tardi per le prossime elezioni.

In alcuni casi, le donne possono detenere il potere, ma sono principalmente concentrate in posizioni meno importanti e in settori cosiddetti 'femminili', come per esempio nel Governo Draghi.

IV. Donne ed economia

La vita lavorativa delle donne in Italia e in Francia è un po' diversa; anche se si basa su realtà ragionevolmente simili, le particolarità sono soprattutto culturali. Le quote di genere sono state introdotte non solo in politica ma nel mondo del lavoro in generale. Esse stabiliscono una percentuale obbligatoria di entrambi i generi nel mondo del lavoro per garantire la parità di rappresentanza. In Francia, questo metodo è stato inaugurato con le leggi del 1999-2000 sulla parità in politica. Nell'ambito delle azioni positive, il 27 gennaio 2011 è stata anche promulgata una legge che fissa le quote per le donne nei consigli di amministrazione e di sorveglianza. L'Italia ha soprattutto emanato la legge Golfo-Mosca il 12 luglio 2011. Queste leggi prevedono l'introduzione graduale di quote per andare verso la femminilizzazione degli organi di gestione delle grandi imprese.

Un'altra questione critica spesso sollevata dalle donne è il 'Gender Pay Gap', ossia il divario retributivo di genere. In tutto il mondo, la discriminazione impedisce alle donne di essere pagate quanto i loro colleghi maschi per lo stesso lavoro. La nota frase "equal pay for equal work" è, infatti, utilizzata dalla popolazione femminile per chiedere che le donne siano prese sul serio e raggiungere la tanto attesa parità di genere, non solo in teoria ma anche in pratica e in termini economici. Nel 2018, il GPG italiano calcolato in questo modo è stato del 5,5%, un valore decisamente inferiore alla media dell'UE28. In Francia, nel 2020, le donne erano ancora pagate meno degli uomini, subendo un divario salariale del 16%. Già sancita dal Trattato di Roma del 1957, l'uguaglianza tra donne e uomini è ora oggetto dell'articolo 23 della Carta dei diritti fondamentali dell'Unione europea. L'Unione europea sta facendo progressi reali in questo campo da anni ormai. Nonostante ciò, resta ancora molto da fare.

La povertà invece è una piaga che colpisce tutte le nazioni. Ma, naturalmente, i meno istruiti sono i primi a soffrire, soprattutto nel mondo in cui viviamo, dove la solidarietà è molto carente. In Somalia, la povertà è spinta a un livello di sofferenza inimmaginabile. Con la guerra civile come conseguenza della cacciata di Siad Barre, il paese è entrato in una grave crisi sociale, umanitaria, finanziaria, morale. Il vuoto lasciato dall'ex dittatore e dopo dai Signori della guerra, è stato riempito dagli estremisti islamici di Al Shabaab, un gruppo terroristico affiliato ad Al Qaida, che fa regnare il terrore nel paese da vent'anni oramai. Questo gruppo spinge le popolazioni del sud della Somalia a cercare riparo nei campi umanitari del Kenya. Lì però la povertà è tanta e le prime a soffrirne il prezzo sono le donne con i loro figli. Queste donne rifugiate, come molte altre, sono delle sopravvissute. Fortunatamente le organizzazioni umanitarie lavorano duramente per alleviare la fame e le numerose problematiche che conoscono queste donne.

Sulla base della loro esperienza e dello scambio di informazioni, molte agenzie umanitarie professionali ritengono che sia imperativo incoraggiare la società civile ad affrontare le cause profonde della migrazione forzata a livello nazionale e internazionale per garantire la sicurezza e l'emancipazione delle donne. È fondamentale concedere alle donne il diritto al lavoro per prevenire

abusi e sfruttamento sul posto di lavoro, spesso all'interno dei campi, e aiutare a ratificare la Convenzione internazionale sulla protezione dei diritti di tutti i lavoratori migranti e dei membri delle loro famiglie.

Lo stato federale della Somalia invece è uno stato completamente assistito negli ultimi venti anni. L'Unione Europea, gli Stati Uniti e molti altri hanno speso miliardi di euro per decenni, ma i risultati di questo impegno sono più che deludenti. Nonostante tutto, la Somalia ha un settore privato abbastanza 'buono'. Naturalmente, quando diciamo 'buono', è tutto relativo. Le donne vi giocano un ruolo essenziale. Dato che la maggior parte di loro sono analfabete perché non sono potute andare a scuola e ottenere un'educazione formale e non hanno competenze significative per il mercato, hanno difficoltà a trovare lavoro nel settore formalmente riconosciuto. Inoltre, questi lavori sono spesso mal pagati.

Pertanto, la maggior parte delle donne salariate lavora nel settore informale; esse formano una parte sempre più importante del campo delle piccole e medie imprese. La maggioranza ha delle bancarelle e vende i propri prodotti al mercato. La vendita è sempre locale, dato che poco o niente commercio lascia la Somalia.

V. Donne, violenza e società civile

In tutte le latitudini, purtroppo, la violenza contro le donne è una piaga terribile. Anche quando le donne vivono in paesi pacifici. Ogni giorno e in ogni nazione si sente parlare di femminicidio. Perché tanta violenza? Per molti anni, la violenza contro le donne non è stata riconosciuta all'interno delle mura domestiche; poteva esserlo quando la violenza veniva dall'esterno, ma allora era considerata un crimine contro la morale e non contro la persona. I rapporti e le indagini nazionali hanno rivelato la portata del problema in Europa. In particolare, hanno mostrato un'ampia variazione nelle risposte nazionali a questa violenza.

La *Convenzione del Consiglio d'Europa sulla prevenzione e la lotta alla violenza contro le donne e la violenza domestica*, nota anche come *Convenzione di Istanbul*, è un trattato fondamentale per proteggere le donne, i bambini e le donne migranti dalla violenza. Gli Stati che ratificano la Convenzione devono criminalizzare diversi reati, tra cui la violenza psicologica (articolo 33), lo stalking (articolo 34), la violenza fisica (articolo 35), la violenza sessuale, compreso lo stupro, che copre esplicitamente qualsiasi impegno in atti non consensuali di natura sessuale con una persona (articolo 36), il matrimonio forzato (articolo 37), l'aborto e la sterilizzazione forzata (articolo 39).

Per quanto riguarda l'Italia e la Francia, entrambe hanno firmato e ratificato la Convenzione nel 2014 e hanno messo in atto le misure indicate nel trattato per aiutare le vittime e punire i colpevoli. Purtroppo però, molte donne muoiono ancora a causa di questi abusi personali. Nel 2020 in Francia, 90 donne sono state uccise dai loro partner o ex mariti, un forte calo rispetto ai 146 femminicidi registrati dal governo nel 2019. In Italia, le donne vittime di omicidio volontario nel 2020 sono state 112, 111 nel 2019.

La Convenzione di Istanbul tratta anche delle Mutilazioni Genitali Femminili nel suo articolo 38. Grazie a importanti agenzie delle Nazioni Unite come HRW, OMS, le MGF/C non solo sono riconosciute a livello internazionale come una violazione dei diritti umani delle ragazze e delle donne, ma sono anche una violazione dei diritti dei bambini in quanto questa terribile pratica viene solitamente perpetrata contro bambine dai 4 ai 12 anni, e a volte anche più grandi. L'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità le classifica in quattro tipi principali. Quella praticata in Somalia è la peggiore. Si basa su credenze ancestrali che garantiscono la verginità della ragazza e quindi la sua fedeltà coniugale. Pertanto, la ragazza è più adatta al matrimonio e sarà quindi accettata più facilmente nella famiglia del marito in cui vivrà. È una questione di onore, di purezza, di controllo della sessualità femminile, e un rituale di transizione. Gli stupri e i matrimoni forzati, orchestrati dagli Shabaab o non, sono la base della sottomissione della popolazione femminile e del terrore che l'accompagna.

In Europa, il movimento Me Too, ha anch'esso puntato il dito contro gli stupri e le violenze.

Conclusione

Il viaggio che abbiamo intrapreso in questa tesi ci ha mostrato quanto diversa e allo stesso tempo simile possa essere la condizione della donna, a seconda che si viva in Europa o in Africa, soprattutto in Somalia, uno dei paesi più poveri del mondo.

Per anni le donne italiane, francesi e somale hanno lottato per i loro diritti. La loro condizione è stata oggetto di numerose ricerche, studi e analisi dall'inizio del secolo scorso. La ragione fondamentale è che, sebbene le donne rappresentino la metà dell'umanità, hanno sempre avuto una grande difficoltà ad essere riconosciute, rispettate e ascoltate. I secoli passati non sono stati molto clementi con loro.

Abbiamo visto che la mancanza di mezzi e persino la povertà estrema fanno vacillare tutti i diritti acquisiti nel tempo e nelle lotte in Europa. Le mentalità sono estremamente difficili da cambiare, e quando una società patriarcale e la religione islamica sono coinvolte, le donne sono ancora più a rischio di prima.

Una vera uguaglianza in tutti i settori è ancora una realtà lontana per le donne ovunque nel mondo, in Europa e all'estero. Tuttavia, è certo che per farne un obiettivo primario, è indispensabile cominciare dalla classe politica. Vogliamo che quest'ultima sia una rappresentazione fedele della nostra società, profondamente diversa e multiforme, con persone capaci e preparate. È inoltre più che giusto attuare misure forti ed efficaci che possano ridurre il 'gender gap' a qualsiasi livello della società e dare alle donne la possibilità di sfondare il 'soffitto di vetro' e avanzare nelle loro carriere, libere dal peso della discriminazione, potendo fare scelte per se stesse senza rinunciare a una vita appagante proprio come fece la generazione degli anni '70.

Se le relazioni di potere tra uomini e donne rimangono sbilanciate e alle donne non viene "permesso" di partecipare attivamente al processo decisionale, la comunità globale non sarà in grado di affrontare le grandi sfide che ci attendono. Le quote elettorali di genere possono funzionare. In molti stati, hanno aiutato la gente abituata a vedere più volti femminili in posizioni di potere. Sovvertire dunque le norme culturali radicate in modo che la società di oggi diventi equa e rispettosa della diversità deve essere l'obiettivo primario di ogni democrazia. Tuttavia, opporre l'uguaglianza al merito è assolutamente ingiusto ed ingannevole.

Nella società ideale e concretamente democratica e giusta in cui si può sperare di vivere un giorno, non ci saranno cariche istituzionali che una donna non avrà occupato;

Le giovani donne non smetteranno quindi di inseguire i loro sogni più ambiziosi e faranno di tutto per raggiungere i loro obiettivi perché nessuna realtà politica o professionale sarà inaccessibile. Questa società darà alle ragazze, così come ai ragazzi, la certezza che non ci sono carriere a cui non possano aspirare, né lavori troppo difficili da occupare, e farà sì che la competenza e la determinazione siano gli unici criteri che meritano di essere presi in considerazione nella scelta dei leader di domani.