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The Social Role of Women during Conflicts: a comparative historical examination of women's societal development in times of war.

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Introduction

The past and history of women is characterized by unequal treatment, reduced opportunities and societal expectations which always hindered their potential. Their approach and response to this behavior has made their social standing a source of worry and interest for millennia. The social position of women during World Wars I and II is examined in Chapter 1. To begin, I present a summary of the epoch highlighting the suffragette crusade's importance and effect on women's societal standing and political participation. Franchise for women was sanctioned in numerous countries owing to the exertions of suffragettes, a faction of advocates who strove for women's prerogative to cast a ballot. By promoting women's political rights and active engagement in public life, they questioned conventional gender norms. Women's social standing and function in society would eventually alter as a result of the suffragette movement's wave of change. I also look at how women were utilized for propaganda and how their image was exploited and merchandised throughout the war. Propaganda, indeed, was initially used by governments and other groups to enlist the public, foster a sense of national identity, and defend military operations. However, gender stereotypes and expectations were reinforced in numerous instances when women were shown as heroines and caregivers. Furthermore, because they worked in a variety of fields, including factories, hospitals, and the military, women's real duties throughout the war often diverged from these representations. I also explore how war affects women, especially how it significantly changed women's social and economic position, both positively and negatively. With the absence of men in the workforce during the first two World Wars, the role of women rose accordingly and empowered them with independence. Nevertheless, their employment opportunities receded substantially when the men returned home and rejoined the workforce after the wars had ended. Gains achieved during the war were reversed, and women's economic and social position once again depended on males. Women's health and welfare were significantly impacted by the conflict as well, as they experienced higher levels of stress, trauma, and diseases. Finally, I examine whether the same issue played out during both World Wars by contrasting how women were treated during the two historical intervals. Although there were numerous parallels and substantial distinctions between the two eras, there were also many differences. The number of women working rose during both wars, but the type of jobs they did changed. Women worked in traditionally feminine industries like nursing and

administrative work during World War I, whereas during World War II, they worked in industries with a male predominance, like manufacturing, construction and military forces. Additionally, the propaganda deployed throughout the two conflicts was different, with World War II featuring a more nuanced picture of women. Subsequently, Chapter II investigates how the societal position of women has altered over the past century while focusing on the Syrian civil war of 2011. In the following section I will go over the excruciating experiences of Syrian Women during the crisis, along with their involvement in political and economic activities. Indeed, Syrian Women endured several adversities during the crisis, that range from gender-based violence to relocation and economic instability. Nonetheless, they also contributed significantly to attempts to promote women's rights and foster peace during the conflict settlement process. As I will elaborate on later in the paper, the essentiality of women's participation in the context of dispute resolution is undoubted. Following on, I deeply analyse the problem of gender-based violence and how the latter impacted this community. As I afore-mentioned, Syrian women endured a series of violence both physically and psychologically, ranging from sexual assault, forced marriages and human trafficking. Being women more socially exposed to such risks, as considered weaker and sexualized continuously, gender-based violence is known to be common in such contexts. The civil conflict in Syria has produced a complicated and protracted catastrophe that has widened gender disparities and added new types of violence against women. As I aforementioned, in addition to talking about the difficulties Syrian women experienced throughout the crisis, I also look at how they contributed to establishing peace. In the past, women have not participated in peace talks, but in recent years, there has been a rising understanding of the significance of engaging women in the peace process. Women's particular viewpoints and life experiences can help create more inclusive and long-lasting peace accords. Women in Syria have been actively involved in attempts to promote peace, organizing grassroots campaigns and fighting for their inclusion in the negotiations. However, their involvement is still minimal, and they encounter major obstacles to effective participation. A more engaging inquiry into the dynamic between entities, predominantly the EU and UNDP, necessitates scrutinizing their makeup through a gendered perspective. The EU and UNDP have both committed to advancing gender equality and empowering women, but their approaches and main objectives vary.

The EU has established programs and policies with a heavy emphasis on gender mainstreaming to include gender perspectives in all facets of its operations. On the other hand, the UNDP takes a more focused approach, emphasizing the political and economic empowerment of women. I want to show how differently gender equality is conceived and treated by contrasting these two institutions.

The last chapter switches its attention to the present, building on the preceding chapters' analytical analyses of women's societal roles within the historical settings of World War I, World War II, and the Syrian war. In particular, it looks at the favourable legal advancements that have influenced women's positions over time with a focus on a more up-to-date conflict, namely the Russo-Ukrainian battle of 2022. In this final section, I'll also go through my study's findings and draw some conclusions on how adversity affects women's social roles. Through this investigation, I want to demonstrate how a range of elements, including political institutions, economic conditions, and cultural norms, have an effect on the formation and development of women's social positions.

Chapter 1: The social role of Women during World War I and World War II

The First and second world wars were periods that upset all the material and affective habits of society. Indeed, both wars were turning points that brought significant changes in the role and, by extension, the perception of women in general, who, more specifically, were given a chance to undertake historically male-dominated positions within the dwindling workforce and cover jobs initially intended for and predominantly held by men. Roles were entirely changed and rearranged as a consequence of women joining the employment as the line between generally held gender roles for men and women was starting to blur and would finally shift for good. In an attempt to gain insight into the way women's expected functions in society evolved during the First and Second World Wars, this portion will concentrate on a number of happenings that added to the rise of women's significance in public and exemplify the impacts their war participation had on their existences, along with popular views on the duties of each sex. Most of the events that characterize this period can be considered beneficial consequences of what someone may define as the starting point of this social revolution: the lack of a workforce. Indeed, women's duties were predominantly domestic at the start of World War One, with few prospects for paid employment outside the home. At the start, the

demand for work expanded, so more females commenced employment. Females acquired novel prospects because of the battle which led to a deficiency of personnel, and numerous of them sensed empowered by it. Although making up roughly 40% of the total workforce within the United States in 1918, according to Meyerowitz's findings published back in 1982, women at the time were still largely relegated to jobs predominantly considered appropriate for their gender. (Meyerowitz, 1982). These unexpected circumstances kindled the souls of women accustomed to limiting themselves to an insanely narrow range of duties, starting a process of emancipation in every area of daily life. Friction between sexes was sparked by the confidence women gained as a result of the gradual dissolution of strict gender norms. While many males perceived this phenomenon as stifling for their masculinity, several women experienced a sense of strength (Dobrowski, 2004). Alternatively, one might cautiously presume that as employed females abruptly achieved financial autonomy, they simultaneously acquired the liberty to determine if they desired to wed or bear offspring.

This economic independence meant that women were no longer dependent on males. Therefore, it's possible that although women gained independence, males lost it as a result of the inability to govern economically independent women.

Indeed, the social and political situation in the early twentieth century can be considered a perfect manifestation of gender stereotypes; it represented the most common of them: hegemonic masculinity, defined by R.W. Connell as a "practice that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of the common male population and women, and other marginalized ways of being a man". In other words, it is basically the common and shared belief that men must be associated with strength, power, confidence, and independence. Society and everything the latter brings with it, at that time, was an expression of patriarchal power; it glorified the essence of "manhood". It adhered to specific gendered norms, which involved a distinct division between men and women in any kind of environment.

For the first time in history, the traditional notions of women's work were challenged; their participation in the war effort ranged from active participation in battles, war relief associations, peace movements, and employment in the war industry (Morselli and Lehmann, 2016). Gender beliefs that characterized that era, which according to Carpenter RC, should define the "appropriate relations between and among men and women" (Carpenter, 2003), were challenged by the impact of war on women, which led to a series of changes on different

levels, from social to political, laying the groundwork for further developments that we can witness today. Yet, it is necessary to point out that although the First World War laid the foundation for subsequent changes, the fundamental gender concepts persisted throughout the war, and women were still chained to strict morals and referred to as the embodiment of domesticity and maternity. As Grayzel points out, even though some women praised their newfound access to previously exclusively male professions and expressed a desire to keep them after the war, others endured difficulties of different natures, which suggested a restoration to the pre-war conditions. (Grayzel, 2014)

It was not until the late 20th that women gained access to all formal rights to professions, including control over reproduction, the right to pursue professions, and proper gender equality within work and institutions. This historical era, from 1914 to 1918, has seen a significant shift that could be defined as more internal and ideal rather than tangible, which instead can be properly seen during the Second World War. In the first period, new and innovative conceptions of women gradually started to spread within the societies of war-affected nations, initially supported by multiple activist movements and secondarily conducted in the political and workplace context.

1.1 Overview of the Historical Period and the Suffragette

The necessity of establishing limits and omissions in this exploration is critical before progressing. Especially for the initial portion, where I will address the First and Second World Wars, covering every nation involved comprehensively is unachievable. As such, as I contended initially, the aim of this part is to highlight the commonalities among women across countries, encompassing the controversial societal debates on women's social, political and cultural functions during the strife. The time, also termed the "Second Thirty Years' War," spanning 1914 to 1945, was marked by two horrendous global conflicts, the rise of tyrannical regimes in Europe, and other meaningful turmoil and transformations. The historical events of these years had a domino effect on society, especially the Western one, which witnessed a total change in the role of women. Prior to the first world war, women were generally consigned to conventional home responsibilities and had few opportunities for educational and professional prospects. Distinctively, the requirements of the war push females to occupy assorted jobs, spanning from factory employees to caregivers, to fighters.

A book that I will utilize for this starting part is the volume “Women and the First World War” by Susan Grayzel, which gives a chronicled review of the initial portion of this time frame and inspects the various encounters that ladies persevered during the contention. The book contends that the war had a solid impact on ladies' life at home and on the cutting edges. Grayzel, by drawing on a multitude of original materials (diaries, letters, official records), explores how women from diverse cultures and nationalities participated in the war effort and how the latter altered their lives. The book discusses gender and nationality concerns as well, demonstrating how this period of crisis, despite giving women new possibilities, also reaffirmed preconceived notions about gender. The multi-disciplinary open-access archive by Francesca Morselli and Jorg Lehmann, published in 2016, provides a concise idea of women's position during the first world war. The innovations worth noting and known to be pillars of women's process of emancipation include their participation in war efforts and the army, their essential contribution to nursing, their employment, and the pacifist and Suffragette movements. Finally, "Women and War" is a book by Nicole Ann Dombrowski, published in 2004, which gives a perfect chronological overview of the evolution of women's duties in the twentieth century: by using case studies that deal with multiple facades of women's roles during wartimes, it analyses certain events in diverse countries that show how the role of women in a context of this kind changed throughout the years. Although this time in history marked the start of a crucial social revolution for women, it is also fair to note that this discourse cannot be generalized. Women's official enlistment in the military, as well as their access to education, participation in international trade, and political activism, were all made possible by the First World War. As Dombrowski claims, "while not all women endure war in the same way, similar characteristics structure their multiple experiences" (Dombrowski, 2004), developments did differ significantly from one nation to the next.

It is undeniably true that this wartime offered opportunities previously unavailable to women, but one must not overlook the other side of the coin. Women in war can and must be intended as victims as well, starting by saying that each gain was counterbalanced with a loss at the front, whether it was a father, son, or husband. Generally speaking, throughout the two world wars, women in the West achieved significant advancements in terms of economic integration into labor. Specifically, during the First World War, the nineteenth-century process of economic unification in Europe accelerated. Yet, on the other hand, if one wanted to use a

more specific lens by focusing on each nation-state, it becomes evident that the development of women in society during this period is partly subjective. In Germany, as Dombrowski's book reports, not only all German women lost the ability to participate in politics and the economy, German Jewish women saw all of their civil rights abolished. Furthermore, another example could be post-colonial countries, where women had to face the most severe obstacles to the establishment of women's economic protection and begin to get equal protection under unions or labour laws only after World War II. (Dombrowski, 2004)

The question of women's voting rights became an issue in the 19th century and the struggle was particularly intense in Great Britain and the United States, but these countries were not the first to grant women the right to vote. World War I and its aftermath speeded up the enfranchisement of women in the countries of Europe and elsewhere. In the period 1914–39, women in 28 additional countries acquired equal voting rights with men or the right to vote in national elections. (Britannica)

The struggle for women's suffrage during World War I and II was a pivotal moment in the fight for gender equality, as it challenged traditional gender roles and paved the way for women's political participation. In the interim, community events, gatherings, and marches transpired backing the female enfranchisement as popularity for the suffragette movement rose. When the Great War began, the feminist groups reoriented their attention to aiding the war effort and their triumph largely helped in securing the populace's total advocacy for the rationale.

Consequently, the most critical development was the accomplishment of women in demonstrating to society the groundlessness of those gendered prejudices. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) encouraged women to work in munitions industries and hospitals while suspending its campaign for women's suffrage in 1914.

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) similarly put a halt to its election campaign in 1915 and concentrated on aiding the war effort, with some of its members going on to found the Women's Party. (Britannica).

The general public's perceptions of women's roles started to change drastically. By 1918, President Woodrow Wilson had admitted to Congress the importance of women's contributions to the war effort. He advocated suffrage "as a war measure" saying that the war could not be won without the involvement of women. (De Witte, 2020)

1.2 Women and Propaganda

During the first of the two world wars, women were also highly "advertised" I daresay. Their image was used for a number of specific purposes. As Grayzel reports, the most prominent example of this phenomenon is Great Britain. Initially, women were used as motivation for the soldiers at the front, but on other occasions, they were used to demonize the enemy that eventually attacked civilians, as in the case of Germany: after the massacre of Scarborough in which 78 women and children were killed, the British press shared a picture of a little girl holding a baby in front of a shattered house. (Grayzel, 2014)

Some nations also used allegorical imagery of women representing their country, as in the case of France with her Marianne. For the first time, women were associated with allegories of liberty, success, and equity. Governments tried to link these qualities with the righteousness of the country's cause.

However, the most effective sources of propaganda were against the brutalities of the German Army. According to Grayzel, the most fitting example would be the so-called "rape of Belgium". This brutal title is no mistake: Germany perpetrated a series of crimes against a nation that had declared itself neutral, leading to a large number of refugees and violated women. Following this event, "brutalised, naked bodies of women appeared in this new form of Allied propaganda".

Britain, in particular, really drew attention to the fact that Germany would "execute a heroic and virtuous woman" (Grayzel, 2014)

The aim was not only to paint Germany as derogatorily but also to mobilize male support and action, aiding the recruitment of volunteers for the armed forces.

Propaganda painted also new realities like the entry of women into the workforce. Women swelled the ranks of paid labourers when males joined the armed forces, finding employment on a level never seen either before or after the war. As Grayzel reports, women's waged employment "increased by 400.000 in Britain within the first year of the war, and this was before a large-scale protest in July 1915 where women demanded the right to serve, led by feminist activists of the suffragette Women's Social and Political Union" (Grayzel, 2014)

As the war dragged on and women's work pervaded all kinds of industries, initiatives to enlist women's labor were seen in both Britain and Germany. Wartime indeed brought together women from a variety of backgrounds, with different ethnicities, nations, and ages. A spirit

of female solidarity began to develop, fuelled by a sense of community and shared issues among the women who populated the factories.

Women's help was so large that, citing Susan Grayzel, "it gave rise to the expression home-front, to characterise the presumable contributions that those at home (women) made to the war effort" (Grayzel, 2014)

The strongest challenge to social customs and gender roles of that period was women's entry into the police environment. The most known of that period was the Women's Police Service (WPS), which defined itself as an independent body to "coerce appropriate social and sexual behavior" between men and women. (Grayzel, 2014) They however tended to be older, engaged, and from privileged groups; consequently, not representative.

Women served also as doctors throughout World War I and II: this innovation however did not directly question established gender roles. Nursing did expose young women to some of the most gruesome realities of war but it basically exploited women's supposedly inherent loving abilities maintaining their subservience to male doctors. Furthermore, women, who wished to work as doctors for the military or the government during World War I were frequently turned down, which forced them to band together and make their own way to the places where they were needed.

Indeed, as Grayzel reports, nurses in the USA freelanced to find work, while others worked for the Red Cross or founded their own American Women's Hospitals.

Some doors however were opened for women in the medical field, especially in Britain. Female doctors also insisted on serving in locations where they could care for injured troops, and the War Office eventually granted them permission to do so. (Leneman, 1994) Rules excluding women from combat were impossible to uphold and went against what was necessary.

The most significant medical enterprise in Britain entirely administered by women was the Scottish Women's Hospitals (SWH), founded by the suffragist Elsie Inglis. This organization first launched a campaign through the Common Cause, which was the newsletter of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies. (Grayzel, 2014)

The nursing experiences that women endured during the wars generated a particularly heated debate within society. As I indicated in the preceding paragraph, women were frequently used as propaganda: heroic nurses became a mainstay of wartime popular culture. But, as a result of the majority of participating countries deliberately seeking out women from the higher

classes, these women found themselves undertaking hitherto unimaginable activities, including having personal contact with male bodies. The society to which they returned was thus frequently distrustful of their morality and behavior: "The wartime world required this service from women, but the post-war world was not always sure what to do with the women who had performed it." (Grayzel, 2014)

1.3 Consequences of War on Women

As one may anticipate, the effects of the First World War on particular women varied greatly. It was based on a number of variables, including class, nation, geography, ethnicity, age, conflict, and loss. However, there are certain elements that may be generalized. For example, women gained increased political rights and social and economic prospects in several nations, mostly in the West. They were nonetheless regarded as their families' main caregivers. The role of the mother was established before, during (most visibly through propaganda), and after the war. The number of women who had the democratic right to vote, however, increased dramatically following the conclusion of the war and during the interwar years.

But how much did the war speed up this process? Would it have been granted if there had not been a global conflict in which women actively participated? Can the latter be conceived as a sort of concession, or better, a reward? As Grayzel reports, "the kinds of war work and war service performed by women provided both a rationale and an excuse for male legislators to grant women the vote" (Grayzel, 2014).

Initially, several countries did not seize this chance; a few acted earlier, like New Zealand (1894) and Australia (1901). Unexpectedly, Russia was the first war participant to allow women to vote in 1917. Nonetheless, this did occur during a time of crisis and upheaval, when a temporary government was trying to garner the broadest support. In a revolutionary setting, the Weimar Constitution granted German women the right to vote in 1918. On the other hand, France made headlines in 1916 when it proposed a law known as "suffrage for the dead," which luckily was never enacted. This legislation would have granted the right to vote solely to women who had a male relative who passed in battle in order to replace his vote. The premise that females might have earned this privilege with such a loss obviously sparked debate. Feminists opposed the measure that expected women to receive the vote in

this way rather than by being acknowledged as having equal standing to men. One thing that must be acknowledged is the role of the suffragette movement in securing voting rights for women, particularly in the UK and the US. The suffragettes contributed to this achievement in a variety of ways, starting by raising awareness through events, marches, demonstrations, and newspaper articles. The most significant effort, however, was seen through the practice of lobbying: one of the most interesting outcomes of this practice is the "Cat and Mouse Act", also known as the Prisoners Act. It was introduced in 1913 in the United Kingdom and permitted authorities to free suffragette inmates that went on hunger strikes to protest their treatment in jail. The measure was in reality intended to keep suffragettes from becoming martyrs and minimize unwanted publicity if they died in prison. Suffragettes, however, in response to this measure, launched a campaign to highlight its harshness and pressure the government. In the UK and USA where, as aforementioned, the movement was particularly active with respect to other belligerent countries, changes happened respectively in 1918, with the Representation of the People Act and in 1920, with the famous 19th Amendment. Another salient point with regard to women in employment, society's behaviour in the post-war period towards women can be considered as controversial. Indeed, this behaviour varied greatly across different nation-states. In general, few women desired to return to domestic duty, and a more comprehensive range of vocations became available to them. Yet, the fundamental prevalent notion of male superiority persisted, as well as the process of demobilisation hence rendering the advances observed during the conflict fleeting and short-lived. Therefore, it is conceivable to imagine what kinds of sentiments led to such fervent growth and support for the women's movement during this period and thereafter. Women factory workers, which were the most popular during the conflict were also the most affected by the end of the war. Many of them were fired and substituted by men or, in the best-case scenario, they were offered to take jobs at significantly reduced pay. Many former belligerent states were trying to send the message that "women could not expect the same kinds of opportunity for work at the higher wages that they have enjoyed during the war". (Beddoe, 1989; Braybon, 1981) Hatred towards women began to spread within societies: unemployed veterans were seen as indicating that women were stealing jobs from them by declining to go back home. In France, authorities like Louis Loucheur, Minister of Armaments, pushed women wartime manufacturing employees to come home as their new moral duty. (Downs, 1995: 188) Labor organizations

and employers in practically every former warring country had agreed that workers relocating from military duty should reclaim their pre-war jobs, which meant that women would have been discharged, beginning with those judged "not dependent on their wages". (Rouette, 1997) Most notably, post-war social policies increased the struggle for married women to find a paid job, which was deemed "unsocial". Post-war unemployment services directed women away from manufacturing and into domestic service and agriculture (Rouette, 1997) Statistically speaking, many countries embroiled in the conflict witnessed a decrease in paid jobs for women. For instance, the quantity of women working in factories in Danzig dropped by 90% between October 1918 and February 1919.(Bessel,1993) In the years following World War One, the female labor force employed in America's burgeoning industrial sector contracted by nearly 40 percent, plummeting precipitously from the zenith of some 2.5 million women manufacturing operatives nationwide in 1918 to a nadir of only 1.5 million such workers a scant half-decade later in 1923. (US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1925). In the aftermath of the Armistice and preceding economic downturn, the substantial cohort of industrious females engaged in occupations across the factories and shipyards of Britain sharply dwindled from well over four million souls at the cessation of hostilities to a markedly diminished populace of three and one half million by 1921. (Braybon, 1989) Despite the economic turmoil that followed the Great War's end, the number of women employed in Germany's industrial sector gradually declined over the ensuing seven years, falling from 2.7 million in 1918 to only 2.3 million souls by 1925. (Cassata, 2002) Women's employment in professions such as social service, finance, and commerce, on the other hand, has increased throughout the West. This was principally owing to legislation, such as the Italian Sacchi Law of 1919, which permitted women to hold official employment other than military, judicial, and diplomatic positions. (De Grazia, 1994)

1.4 WW2: Same scenario?

The subsequent conflict displayed analogous forms, albeit with certain divergences, especially concerning the martial entanglement of women and the ramifications thereof on their societal function thereafter. With men called on to duty in the military during the global conflict of the 1940s, the fairer sex was again obliged to shoulder previously

unfamiliar duties. Females contributed to the war effort by operating in industrial facilities, wharves, and other enterprises, as well as nurses, secretaries, and further sustentative stations. Women's contributions to the war effort throughout both wars defied established gender norms, paving the path for greater gender equality in the ensuing decades. During the initial global conflict however, the administration was reluctant on promoting women to join the workforce, women's contributions to the war effort were frequently downplayed or disregarded, and women were not formally recognized for their service until several years after the war concluded. In contrast, during the Second World War, women's contributions were much more extensively acknowledged and feted, and women were awarded martial honors and further recognition for their service. The optimal representation of this shift in women's repute is the well-known "Rosie the Riveter", one of the most significant visages of the feminist movement. The "Westinghouse Electric Company" instituted "Rosie the Riveter" as a promotional mascot in 1942 to encourage the recruitment of women in the enterprise. Rosie was depicted as a powerful, autonomous lady dressed in a crimson bandana, a plaid blouse, and dungarees. Her picture was also used in advertisements and billboards to promote the concept that women could undertake men's jobs and that their involvement was critical to the war's triumph. While society was dubious of handing most of the labor to women during the first war, it was considerably more favourable to the latter during the second conflict, to the point of urging women to assume men's place in fabrics and industries. Literature regarding women and World War II often associates women with the military. Indeed, there was a significant transformation also in this sector, which considerably expanded to provide help and protection through various groups such as Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES), Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), and Women's Army Corps (WAC). These occurrences called into question the unchanging and basic qualities of women, which had long portrayed them as essentially calm and naturally unaggressive. In the United States, over 350,000 females participated in the war efforts during the second World War. The Women's Army Corps came into existence in 1942, enabling women to assist in non-combative roles like chauffeurs, mechanics and secretaries. In 1943, the Women's Airforce Service Pilots plan was formulated, sanctioning women to pilot non-combative missions such as transporting aircraft and executing flight assessments. The WAVES scheme enabled women to aid the US Navy in non-combative capacities like radio controllers and clerks. Females also served

in numerous roles in the west, as with the United Kingdom. In 1938, the Auxiliary Territorial Service was shaped, enabling women to assist in non-combatative posts like drivers and secretaries. The Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) were also founded in this period, allowing women to serve respectively in the navy and air force. (McEuen, 2016) As I mentioned above, many women in these cases served in non-combat roles. Two countries in particular present the most robust challenge to gender roles: Russia and China. During WWII, almost 800,000 women served in the Red Army, and many of them possessed combat roles. Women pilots also participated in the Soviet Air Force, and female-only sniper teams were founded. The Chinese Red Army intensively trained female recruits not just in combat techniques, but also about the Communist Party's political objective and women's roles within it. Chinese women who joined the army hoped to better themselves via education and active participation in the party crusade. (Dobrowski, 2004) However, despite these developments in the overall workplace, the concept of femininity and the gender rules underlying society remained more or less unchanged. Melissa A. McEuen wrote an article titled "Women, Gender, and World War II" describing the social status of women during WWII with a focus on the US. She reports how dominant gender norms like toxic masculinity and femininity offered methods to preserve the basic social order in the face of rapid change, and when some women questioned these norms, they were harshly criticized. American society, on the one hand, promoted the independence of women, but on the other, it subtly suggested women to not exaggerate. Working women came across magazine advertising advising them to take special attention to beauty and personal cleanliness, otherwise, they would have lost their femininity in wartime America's drastically transformed social milieu. (McEuen, 2016) As women formally entered previously all-male settings, gender "disguise" might be viewed as harmful. These concerns were particularly evident within the WAC, which in 1943 lost its auxiliary status to become a formal part of the United States Army. Concerns over women's sexual independence fuelled allegations in the WAC of a lesbian "danger". United States' medical and public opinion equated female sexual "deviance" with a woman's looks as much as her conduct. The clothing and context in which female soldiers found themselves made them "suspicious" since it challenged the conventions of femininity that root heterosexuality and preserve conventional social order. WAC director Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby directed army women to "avoid a harsh or masculine look that might

provoke adverse public remark". (McEuen, 2016) Furthermore, in 1944, female mechanics at Ellington Air Base in Texas were given lessons about appropriate "work attire" and conduct. These rules demonstrated the importance of clothing in "assigning gender and sexual identities during the war". (McEuen, 2016) So, despite the various innovations, several stereotypes remained firm even in the post-war period. According to McEuen, the most significant adjustments resulted from women's newly acquired confidence and freedom. Many women expected that their new privileges would have been retracted after the war, and these expectations were justified given the aftermath of WWI. Even in this instance, popular political opinion advised women to return to their homes and leave work to males. However, this time, attempts to confine women and persuade them to conduct domestic tasks eventually failed: "Wartime experiences combined with collective memory (...) reinforced the deep foundations of the equality crusades that would take center stage in the post-war generations." (McEuen, 2016) Women were not willing to be thrown into oblivion and consequently mobilized to make sure their effort paid off. The first variation occurred in education: throughout the time succeeding the conflict, females possessed augmented opportunities to extend their schooling. The percentage of women attending college in America ascended from 31% in 1940 to 44% in 1960 and continued to rise in the following years. The quantity of women frequenting university in Britain went from 7% in 1950 to 28% in 1970. (Davies, 2015) With enhanced access to education, women pursued vocations and became financially self-sufficient. This enormous transformation coincided with the most contentious decree, equal remuneration: in the years succeeding World War 2, several nations ratified laws necessitating equal compensation for men and women at employment. The Fair Pay Act was approved in America in 1963 to extirpate payment discrepancies between men and women executing the same occupation. Analogously, in 1970, Britain passed the Equal Pay Act, which proscribed wage discrimination due to gender. (Blau & Kahn, 2007) Curiously, the most conspicuous advancements in rights, like rights over one's body, came later in many warring nations. In that fateful year of societal upheaval and discontent, it withdrew. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling legitimized abortion across the country, according females the ability to make their own reproductive health choices. (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973) Likewise, in 1967, Britain approved the Abortion Act, which permitted women to obtain abortions under certain conditions. (Abortion Act 1967, UK)

Chapter II: A century later: What changed? Women during the Syrian War

I would define the development of women's social position in wartime as linear, which reaches its culmination with the active involvement of women during the civil war in Syria. The involvement of women in the Syrian conflict must indeed be used as evidence that women may actively contribute to resolving conflicts and disprove gender stereotypes that equate them with civilian status and passivity in crises. In this chapter, I plan to analyse the Syrian civil conflict, including its origins, key players, and drivers. I will then discuss the position played by women in the conflict, showing how war is gendered and how women may, even in contexts that leave little room for freedoms as the Syrian government is, belie many of the norms that are still associated with them. The Syrian crisis is a multifaceted, intricate war that destabilized the nation and had significant regional and global effects. Before delving into the specifics of the fight, I feel it is necessary to offer some background information on the Syrian regime, bearing in mind that the revolt began as a civil rebellion. The Syrian Civil War started in 2011 as a consequence of several decades of governmental injustice and cruelty. The initial insurgents strategized nonviolent demonstrations within the southern urban center of Daraa subsequent to the apprehension and mistreatment of three youths who had inscribed anti-governmental slogans on a wall. Subsequently, the demonstrations spread to adjacent urban areas, advocating for the cessation of the authoritarian measures implemented by the Assad government, political restructuring, and the emancipation of incarcerated political dissidents. Indeed, the Syrian government has a history of not indifferent criticisms and accusations to the point that it has been defined by political scientists and journalists as a dictatorship. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad leads a single-party authoritarian administration that has been in power since 2000. (BBC News) The party in question is the Ba'ath Party, which has ruled since a revolt in 1963. (Britannica) As I alluded to before, under Assad's administration, Syria has been characterized by political repression, restricted civil freedoms, and a lack of political pluralism. (Human Rights Watch) The regime has been convicted of various human rights crimes, including torture, extrajudicial murders, and the use of chemical weapons against people. (Amnesty International) The government has also been chastised for its conduct during the civil war itself, notably the deployment of indiscriminate bombing assaults against opposition-held regions and the blockage of humanitarian supplies to besieged areas. (BBC

News) The violence witnessed during the conflict has displaced millions of Syrians and caused major damage to infrastructure and the economy. (World Bank)

By 2012, what had begun as a nonviolent protest had developed into a full-fledged civil war, with several armed groups engaged in combat with the government's soldiers. The majority Sunni Muslim population was placed against the Alawite-run government as the war became more and more sectarian. The crisis also attracted regional and international forces, with the United States and other Western nations supporting opposition organizations while Russia and Iran sided with the government. With the help of Russian forces, the Syrian government recovered control of much of the nation in 2018, including important cities like Aleppo and Damascus. Yet, there are still continued worries about Syria's humanitarian situation as certain places are still experiencing violence.

2.1 Women in Syria

The social position of women in Syria, especially specifically in the Syrian civil war, is undoubtedly a contentious issue. As I previously mentioned, the Syrian government does not enjoy the best reputation, and its treatment of women is also debatable. Women in Syria confront a variety of obstacles on a daily basis. They face job prejudice, particularly in some fields such as politics and the military. An assessment conducted by UNDP in 2019 highlighted the percentage of women in the labor force which counts up to the 13%. Women are limited to low-paying or unofficial job which unfortunately seems to be the smallest problem in this country. Indeed domestic abuse is daily, both by spouses and family-members. UNPF conducted a research few years after the conflict which registred that 1 women out of 3 in Syria experience physical or sexual abuse on a regular basis, within her intimate relationship. Most women are enclosed in their houses, which sounds unexplainable as in Syria education is both free and mandatory.

Cultural expectations and societal standards reinforced conventional gender roles for women in Syria. For instance, women were frequently expected to put family and home duties before obtaining school or a job. Women who did pursue education or work were seen as "deviant" or "unethical."

Despite the government's firm adherence to traditional values and gender norms, Syrian women performed and continue to play essential roles during the crisis, which challenge the

country's renowned female image. Indeed, as it has been asserted by feminist international relations theories, wars are gendered: women experience conflicts differently from men. Not only women are generally excluded from peace negotiations, but the very problem is also that societies during wartimes fail to recognize women's realities and needs, targeting women with various forms of gender-based violence. (Asaf, 2017)

Syria fails to provide a welcoming and safe environment for women; the conflict has just exacerbated these discriminatory tendencies and exposed women to a series of risks, making them the real victims of war. Despite this, Syrian women did and are doing everything they can to aid in the battle, making them a crucial component of any progress seen until now.

Indeed, "Every military base depends on its operations on women". (Enloe, 2014) The Syrian conflict is maintained by female armies that do not adhere to the line between combatants and civilians in traditional warfare. Gendered norms not only make them vulnerable to the violence of various kinds, but they don't even recognize the efforts of women towards the still unresolved conflict.

In other words, women have experienced double injustice during the Syrian crisis. On the one hand, gender-based violence against Syrian women has taken several forms, as Yumna Asaf notes in her 2017 paper, which I shall explore in the section after this one. On the other hand, their role in a hypothetical conflict settlement has been shaped by presumptions and biases that underpin gender norms, such as those of the "innocent civilian" and "especially vulnerable," of which Carpenter RC talks specifically in her book "Women and Children First." Yet Syrian women, particularly the ladies of Zabadani, have demonstrated in a number of ways, that I will also address, how these presumptions are unfounded. Both perspectives are fundamental for the assessment of how the social role of women has evolved in wartime.

2.2 Gender-based violence

Prior to the conflict, Syrian women had few possibilities for education and job and were mainly expected to fulfil domestic responsibilities as wives and mothers. Women's involvement in politics was also restricted since many of them faced obstacles to voting and holding office. Because females had lower rates of literacy and labor force involvement than men in Syria before the crisis, women had a very difficult time finding opportunities for education and employment (United Nations, 2014). Furthermore, there were few women in

positions of authority in the government or other industries, and women were underrepresented in the political arena (United Nations, 2014).

In other words, Syrian society has traditionally been highly patriarchal, with men holding most positions of power and authority within the family. The research on the subject indicates that, as a result, women suffered the greatest disadvantages throughout the battle. The severity of the Syrian crisis affected women in different ways, and all of them are related to their gender and everything that the latter brings with it. Being a refugee is hard, being a woman refugee is even more challenging. As Asaf points out, the problem of Syrian women is not only "unforeseen alteration in conventional gender roles of the Syrian society, but also gender-based violence in the form of harassment and humiliation". (Asaf, 2017)

Various organizations such as Amnesty International and the UNHCR reported shocking data, to say at least, starting from the percentage of female refugees, which amounts to 48% of the total, with 30% being in the age group from 18 to 59. (UNHCR, 2017)

Some of these refugees were interviewed by Amnesty International, and the outcome demonstrates how much the refugee status and the journey to reach it is different for men and women. The non-governmental organization interviewed 40 female refugees who had travelled from Turkey to Greece in northern Europe; nearly all of them claimed that they felt intimidated and endangered at each and every stop along the way. They had to endure the high threats of being raped, assaulted, or robbed by smugglers, security personnel, or police officers. Some smugglers forced these ladies to engage in sexual activity with them in return for a discounted crossing fee. Generally, rape and sexual violence have been identified as the most extensive form of violence faced by women and girls in Syria. (Asaf, 2017)

Besides this, women and girls mentioned domestic abuse, child marriage, and sex for survival as types of violence they are now encountering when they immigrate to other nations. (Djamba and Kimuna, 2015)

The second worst problem for females during the Syrian crisis is healthcare. Healthcare poverty touches on several points, but the sexual and reproductive health of Syrian women is the one which deteriorated tremendously. Although, as Asaf mentions, gathering information about this specific issue is challenging given the conservative culture of the refugees, assessments made by various organizations illustrate issues such as teen-pregnancies, UTIs, and complications during and after pregnancies. (Asaf, 2017)

The psychological aspect has been notably impacted, leading to a sharp rise in suicides and self-injurious behavior. Without any kind of psychological support, women who have endured harassment on the way to a safe haven or more broadly during the crisis itself are more likely to develop depression and other mental health issues. Basically, as a woman, the nightmare does not end once you reach a shelter: in addition to eventual psychological problems, most housing centres frequently fail to serve the needs of women and girls. There are often no sex-separated restrooms, showers, or living spaces accessible for women or families. As a result, rape and other forms of violence against women continue to occur also in those settings that should be considered safe.

2.3 Women and Peace

Women have played a significant role in supporting peace and recovery processes in communities worldwide. Throughout history, women have repeatedly demonstrated their equal ability to men to contribute in various ways in times of war. Yet, despite the various advances in both the social and political fields that women made, they are still frequently identified as less suitable for participation in crisis contexts and are often excluded from critical decision-making processes that affect them as well. How come? It is acceptable to assume that society and its understanding of gender are to blame for the majority of issues. In order to completely comprehend the problem of women's exclusion from crisis decision-making, it is crucial to look at the cultural conventions and assumptions that support gender disparity. Many cultures have engrained gender stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, which contributes to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and the underappreciation of their contributions to society. The contribution of Syrian women to the battle is and was extraordinary. Women have organized and led movements for democracy, freedom, dignity, and peace as well as against sectarianism in several Syrian towns since the revolution's inception in the spring of 2011. They filled both leadership and general ranks of the local committees and actively participated in maintaining relief in besieged neighbourhoods in Damascus and its suburbs. They also organized demonstrations, such as a sit-in on March 16, 2011, in front of the Interior Ministry in Damascus where they demanded the release of prisoners. Furthermore, a new generation of Syrian women feminists arose early in the revolution, and Ghazzawi noted that their sheer existence and the work they were doing

directly confronted the expanding male hegemony that was created throughout the conflict. (Ghazzawi 2014). Syrian women promoted peace and democracy throughout the whole conflict: they wished for a fresh, democratic Syria and realized that it would be impossible to attain this democracy without achieving gender equality. As a result of this understanding, the Syrian Women's Network was founded by 200 people and 29 autonomous, non-governmental organizations. Among other objectives, they proposed a new Syrian constitution and legislation guaranteeing women's full equality in terms of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. This obviously implied a contribution to the resolution of the conflict, but despite their active engagement, women were excluded from formal peace negotiations when they started in 2012 with the Geneva I Conference, both at the peace table and in the outskirts of the discussions.

The Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy was founded at the end of 2013 by fifty women who represented many civil society groups, including eight members of the Syrian Women's Network. (Cassidy 2017). The objectives were to advance the peace process, enhance the humanitarian situation in Syria, and directly include women in the negotiating process. During the Geneva II meetings, these women's groups wanted a 30% female participation quota. Sadly, once again there were very few women on the negotiation teams, and those who did had very few positions. (Asaf, 2017)

The importance of women's involvement, particularly in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, is one of the fundamental misconceptions in society. Numerous studies have shown how important it is for women to take part in these initiatives since their opinions and experiences frequently differ from those of males. Through their involvement, peace processes may be made more inclusive, representative, and long-lasting.

Women could have a greater awareness of the underlying causes of conflict, such as gender-based violence and discrimination, and they might be more sensitive to the needs of children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups. They may be more effective at fostering trust and agreement amongst various groups and can provide a fresh viewpoint to peacebuilding efforts. UN Resolution 1325, which emphasizes the significant role of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding, is one of the most important studies illustrating the relevance of women in peace-building processes. Peace treaties that include explicit clauses on women's rights and gender equality are 35% more likely to persist for at least 15 years, according to this study. This highlights how the involvement and engagement of all parts of society,

including women, is required for long-term peace. In other words, opportunities for long-term peace may be lost if women are excluded from peacebuilding initiatives.

Armed conflict disproportionately affects women and girls, and they are frequently vulnerable to gender-based violence, including sexual assault.

They are more likely to be uprooted from their homes and towns, and they may have trouble receiving essential services like healthcare and education since they are considered immune citizens. These concerns may be handled more effectively by integrating women in peacebuilding efforts, and the core causes of conflict can be better identified and addressed.

However, it appears that the significance of including women in peacebuilding initiatives is not commonly acknowledged. Including those who have been most impacted by a dispute in its settlement should be regarded as a moral requirement by everybody. However, Resolution 1325 offers several more reasons that may be deemed "useful" in today's patriarchal culture. Women have distinct experiences and viewpoints than males, which may add a vital perspective to peacebuilding efforts.

The United Nations has discovered that women's involvement in peacebuilding can improve the state of global security. For instance, a study of peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Timor-Leste discovered that occurrences of sexual and gender-based violence decreased when women were included in security sector reform. Women's involvement in peace talks helps guarantee that concerns like transitional justice, human rights, and economic growth are dealt with in a more comprehensive and long-lasting way.

Only 18% of the 182 peace accords signed between 1989 and 2011 that were the subject of another analysis by the International Peace Institute included any mention of women. Nevertheless, agreements that did involve women were more likely to have clauses that dealt with human rights, victim compensation, and power-sharing arrangements. This underlines even more, how crucial women are to attempts to achieve peace.

In order to ensure a more inclusive, representative, and lasting peace, women must be included in peacebuilding initiatives.

Their distinctive opinions and personal experiences may be used to pinpoint the underlying causes of conflict and deal with problems like economic development, human rights, and transitional justice. As Resolution 1325 has shown, peace accords with explicit clauses addressing women's rights and gender equality are more likely to be long-lasting,

underscoring the necessity of giving women's crucial contributions to peacebuilding efforts more attention.

2.4 Gender and Women

Over the years, there has been a lot of debate and analysis surrounding women's roles during times of war. As we saw in the parts above, the involvement of women in war has questioned established gender norms and given women new chances to participate in activities that were previously only available to males. Nevertheless, despite these advancements, gender stereotypes and the ideology that supports them have frequently prevented women from fully participating in wartime activities and subsequently in daily life. Because crises have always meant a change in society, women's roles have changed over time. Women have actively supported military efforts in a variety of roles, including nursing, intelligence work, and material support.

Despite these advancements, traditional gender roles and norms have frequently prevented women from fully participating in wartime activities. Social and cultural attitudes that uphold the notion that women are predominantly in charge of a number of responsibilities sometimes promote these notions. The societal norms that distinguish humans into two groups grounded on biological attributes uphold the idea that those with certain anatomical features are naturally more adept at particular vocations, combat being exemplary. Consequently, the counterparts are often excluded from the procedures that determine military maneuvers, and their input is habitually disregarded. However, the conception of gender as a framework crafted by society to prescribe behaviors and purposes contingent on one's understanding of physiology has gained prevalence. The predicament essentially lies in the gradual subversion of gender stereotypes having a marked effect on the collective: the matter seems so entrenched in the bedrock of our civilization that it has even politicized the establishments that should safeguard against these tendencies.

This restricts the options accessible to women in many facets of life and puts gender mainstreaming activities on hold.

The latter is defined by the European Union as a process that should allow us to better understand the causes of inequalities between women and men in our societies and to identify the most suitable strategies to combat them. However, it appears from scholars that the

European Union itself has not committed enough to implement these initiatives in contexts that are known to be gender biased, like the one of migration. As Cleton and Bounjour point out in their study, women are not naturally more prone to vulnerability during migration; instead, it is a product of the many oppression and dispossession processes into which they fall. The UNHCR assessed that a multitude of females journeyed to Europe amid contemporary mass migration. The commission computed that a fifth of the voyagers were women and that this fraction was swelling. Due to diverse motivations, women embarked alone or with their progeny and clans, but frequent encounters of gender-founded brutality were the norm for the majority of them.

This violence is frequently committed not just by other immigrant men but also by smugglers, human traffickers, and even EU border patrol officers. (Cleton and Bonjour, 2022) Women's bodies being used as instruments breed the expectation that they will represent the diversity expected of them, which feeds gender stereotypes and binary thinking. This is problematic because it typically stops at the "women and children" paradigm when incorporating gender discourses into policy, which hinders the growth of women's rights.

In a similar way, also the experiences of women in armed conflicts are greatly influenced by gender norms. These social standards make women more vulnerable and make them confront more difficulties, especially in areas where there are conflicts. Using Syrian women throughout the civil war as a case study, we will investigate two important gendered norms that affect women during conflicts: the civilian immunity norm and the especially vulnerable one.

International humanitarian law's civilian immunity rule states that civilians, including women, must be shielded from the effects of armed conflicts and must not be purposefully targeted. Nonetheless, during wars, women frequently experience particular types of violence, such as sexual and gender-based violence. Furthermore, women's access to security, healthcare, and other necessary services may be further hampered by gendered roles and expectations in society, leaving them particularly vulnerable to abuse. While the prevailing assumption accentuates comprehension that females, analogous with progeny, senior citizens, and those with incapacities, necessitate singular concern and safeguarding amid war dispute, the extraordinarily defenseless criterion, conversely, highlights the insight that the aforementioned demographics demand unparalleled solicitude and preservation throughout periods of hostility between and within countries. Although this norm acknowledges the

particular vulnerabilities women confront, it can also promote conventional gender norms that may further limit women's freedom and increase their vulnerabilities in challenging circumstances. It would appear that on many occasions, these mainstream rules that are supposed to protect women often have the opposite effect. In fact, I want to examine the impact that these regulations may have from a particular angle. Although the primary goal of these regulations is to protect women, one might argue that in a setting like the Syrian one, they may instead vilify women in numerous ways. In order to address the particular difficulties women may encounter and to advance gender-sensitive methods of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, it is imperative to understand the possible effects of gendered norms on women during wars and how the latter contribute to the marginalization of women in conflict settings. The recognition of women's unique vulnerabilities in conflict circumstances is crucial to examine how traditional gender norms that restrict women's agency and freedom may have been strengthened. The idea that women are helpless victims who need to be protected may indeed promote negative stereotypes and prevent them from actively participating in discussions about how to resolve disputes and encourage peace. In other words, according to this viewpoint, international humanitarian rules assist in depicting women as helpless victims in disputes, which devaluates both their capacities and their ability to work and contribute effectively, placing them once again on a lower pedestal than males. Contradicting the deeply entrenched yet unsubstantiated presumption that the fairer sex would refrain from wielding weapons and the mistaken belief that they are by their very nature conciliatory and require safeguarding, our previous analysis in the inaugural section of this work revealed these notions to be without basis. The biological differences between men and women are certainly undeniable, and changing a society that is based on this understanding is far from achievable, but it must be recognized that seeing women as more sensitive elements does have an impact on other external and unrelated factors. It is impossible to grasp the reality of things if we do not take into account the complicated and unequal structures of gendered norms. Nonetheless, this argument partly explains Syrian women's exclusion from participating in conflict-related negotiations, peace talks, and decision-making processes; indeed, strict adherence to vulnerable norms may result in restricting women's participation in specific roles during armed conflicts or crisis situations. Although frequently touted as merely helpless casualties of violence rather than crucial contributors to conflict resolution and post-war rebuilding efforts, women are systematically denied opportunities through rigid

societal barriers and prejudices that actively inhibit their ability to help shape more peaceful outcomes, a tragic circumstance that severely hampers global stability and prosperity. Paradoxically, the primary norms that claim to protect women, in a social context with such deeply rooted rules as that of war, lead to the reinforcement of harmful gender stereotypes and limit the recognition of women's agency, skills, and capabilities. This eventually may contribute to disempowering women and undermining their autonomy, dignity, and rights, perpetuating a paternalistic approach that reinforces dependency rather than empowering women as active participants and decision-makers in their own lives and communities. Another example of the ramification of this type of norm is the UNHCR Geneva Convention, which includes "Gender-Related Persecution Guidelines," which interprets gender in a way that excludes groups like women, LGBTQUI+ people, children, and people with disabilities by considering them as needing extra protection because they are seen as "deviant" from the norm. (Freedman, 2016)

Case study: European Union – UNDP on Gender Issues

A key obstacle to women's empowerment is the gendered character of institutions, particularly those that claim to support the advancement and inclusion of women in society. Numerous studies have noted that these institutions themselves frequently have gendered norms, customs, and practices that impact women.

The European Union (EU) is one institution that has been proven to be gendered. Despite its apparent commitment to gender equality, the EU has come under criticism for failing to adequately incorporate gender in its policies and practices. The EU's institutions are allegedly structured by a "gendered logic of appropriateness" that promotes sectors with a male preponderance and feeds gender preconceptions, as I shall discuss in more detail below.

This gendered structure is primarily evident in the EU's foreign and security policies, where women's involvement and engagement are frequently constrained.

Despite the EU's commitment to increasing women's involvement in peace projects, discussions and decision-making procedures regularly exclude women. The military and police, two crucial actors in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), routinely underrepresent women.

With the objective of ensuring that this discourse can be applied in a more general sense, I would like to report a study by Rachel Minto and Lut Mergaert to analyse why and to what extent the process of gender mainstreaming has been so impeded in EU policymaking. The European Union serves in this understanding only as an example of an institution that prevents developments in the social role of women. The authors determine that gender mainstreaming registers a low to medium degree while policy evaluation registers a medium to a high degree after applying 5 criteria to assess institutionalization: (1) formalized adoption; (2) structures and procedures; (3) quality; (4) accountability and compliance; and (5) stability. Despite gender mainstreaming being a constitutionally mandated obligation, the study shows how the EU lacks a formal application framework. (Minto and Mergaert. 2018) The authors report how, in a feminist institutionalism understanding, this occurs as a result of the EU Commission acting in a gendered manner. Through path dependency, "logic of appropriateness," and neutrality, and "layering", gender mainstreaming is not prioritized and applied according to the given guidelines. (Minto and Mergaert, 2018) Additionally, empirical research has emphasized the economic justification for the EU and shown how gender equality is strategically framed within the EU's economic and business perspective. This viewpoint could have had a role in the lack of institutionalization and prioritizing of gender mainstreaming in EU policymaking. Another actor that is proven to be gendered by a research conducted by Chappell L. and Guerrina R. is the European External Action Service. The authors report how the latter applies the approach of "add women and stir" by doing the bare minimum to ensure an equal number of women and men in its personnel. Nonetheless, there is a blatant "vertical segregation" within the organization which is visible also within the unbalanced gender representation in MSs committees in the CSDP. In other words, gender advisors and gender-related topics are not given the attention they deserve and are frequently seen as a "joke" or a woman's issue: the EU's understanding of gender equality is somewhat limited because it only concentrates on integrating women into already-existing structures rather than providing a transformative strategy that dismantles the power structures that support the EEAS. The superficial view of gender equality, where gender is considered as a subfield of human rights policy, is indicative of this absence of a transformational strategy; prioritizing gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting goal that dismantles power systems and encourages revolutionary change is necessary to address this problem. (Chappell, L. and Guerrina R., 2020)

In relation to the case studies previously reported by me, an organization that has demonstrated changes and innovative initiatives regarding gender mainstreaming is the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has heavily advocated gender mainstreaming as a transversal goal that threatens established power structures and encourages revolutionary change. Gender mainstreaming seeks to guarantee that gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality are taken into consideration at each stage of the creation, implementation, and evaluation of policy.

The UNDP has worked hard to include gender mainstreaming into its operations and policies. For instance, the UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy (2018–2021) emphasizes the organization's dedication to gender parity, women's empowerment, and development that takes gender into account. The strategy outlines precise targets and metrics to track progress and names gender mainstreaming as a critical technique for accomplishing these goals. To facilitate gender mainstreaming, the UNDP has also built a number of organizations and procedures. A program like the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme, for instance, evaluates how well an organization adheres to gender mainstreaming principles and offers suggestions and advice for development. The program's goal is to assist UNDP country offices in identifying their gender mainstreaming initiatives' deficiencies and creating initiatives to strengthen them.

The UNDP has also included gender considerations in its planning and programming procedures. Staff members are required under the organization's programming standards to conduct a gender analysis of the environment in which they operate and to create gender-sensitive criteria to track the organization's advancement toward gender equality. To assist its workers in incorporating gender into their agenda, the UNDP has also created gender-mainstreaming educational tools and resources.

All of these measures have, in fact, produced fruitful outcomes in a number of areas. For instance, the organization's 2018 Annual Report reveals that 68% of its global initiatives have gender parity as a key aim, while 91% of its programs in the Arab States area integrated gender issues. The Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme has also assisted UNDP country offices in identifying and filling any gaps in their efforts to fully incorporate gender issues.

The United Nations has also demonstrated its strong support for reducing gender imbalances in Syria, where women were already confronting significant challenges prior to the conflict's onset. As we have seen in the past sections, the conflict has had a catastrophic impact on women and girls, aggravating existing gender disparities and exposing them to new types of discrimination and abuse.

Through a number of initiatives, the UN has been striving to promote gender mainstreaming in the Syrian humanitarian effort. For instance, in order to strengthen GBV safeguarding and responding in humanitarian contexts, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has established a Gender-Based Violence (GBV) program for Syria. The policy calls for a variety of actions, including guaranteeing survivors of GBV the access to vital services, creating safe spaces for women and girls, and educating employees on GBV prevention and response.

UNDP has further promoted gender mainstreaming in Syria in a wider sense via its Syria Resilience Program.

The program's goal is to increase the crisis-affected communities' capacity for coping, with a particular emphasis on advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. The program comprises a variety of activities, including boosting women's involvement in local decision-making and enhancing access to vital services for women and girls. Other activities include supporting women's economic empowerment via skill training and income-generating activities, which will eventually contribute to a notable development in society.

Chapter III: A Leap into the Present

This chapter seeks to identify the concrete developments that have given women more agency, rights, and protection in the context of conflict by closely examining the changing legal environment. Additionally, it offers a nuanced perspective of the experiences, contributions, and difficulties experienced by women by outlining the research's results and conclusions and by focusing on a more up-to-date event being the Russo-Ukrainian battle which started in February 2022.

This chapter contributes to a more significant discussion on gender equality, peacebuilding, and the transformational potential of empowering women in conflict-affected places by examining the interaction between legal frameworks, social dynamics, and conflict realities.

3.1 Women and the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict

The Russo-Ukrainian War of 2022 witnessed the substantial participation of women in the Ukrainian military. In response to the invasion, a considerable number of women volunteered to join the Ukrainian forces, reflecting the historically independent status enjoyed by Ukrainian women. Their involvement offers valuable insights into the roles women can play in defending the nation and assuming leadership positions.

Reports indicate that approximately 50,000 women served in various combat and non-combat roles within the Ukrainian armed forces during the conflict. Among them, about 10,000 women were either deployed to the front lines or occupied positions that could potentially expose them to direct combat. Before the invasion, the total number of women in the military was estimated to be around 32,000. (Elizondo, 2022)

In a significant development, an all-female prisoner-of-war exchange took place in October 2022 between Russia and Ukraine. This exchange involved the repatriation of 108 Ukrainian women, including 37 who had actively participated in the Battle of Azovstal.

Legislation enacted in December 2021 expanded the scope of women's involvement in the Ukrainian military. It mandated that women between the ages of 18 and 60, who were deemed medically fit and employed in specific professions, must register for military service. This legislative amendment considerably broadened the range of occupations subject to mandatory registration. A national poll conducted in the aftermath of the invasion revealed that 59% of Ukrainian women expressed readiness to personally engage in armed resistance against the Russian occupation. (Martsenyuk, 2022)

Several notable individuals emerged during the conflict, exemplifying the courage and dedication of women serving in the Ukrainian military. Inna Derusova, a field medic, saved the lives of numerous soldiers during the Battle of Okhtyrka before tragically losing her life in a Russian artillery attack. As a posthumous recipient of the prestigious Hero of Ukraine award, she became the first woman to receive this honour during the war. Additionally, women such as Liubov Plaksiuk, who commanded an artillery division, and Tetyana Chubar, an artillery platoon commander, gained recognition for their exceptional contributions. (Beaumont, 2022)

Although the involvement of women in the Russian and DPR/LPR militaries was limited, it is worth noting that the Russian Armed Forces have historically faced personnel shortages.

Despite this, the Russian Ministry of Defence has made minimal efforts to enlist women to fill these gaps, instead focusing on addressing draft evasion among men. Discrimination against women in these forces has been evident, with restrictions on their participation in frontline combat roles and limitations on attaining ranks higher than colonel.

Journalism also witnessed the active participation of women during the invasion. Women journalists contributed significantly to the coverage of the war by offering distinctive viewpoints and emphasizing the human cost of the battle. However, female journalists faced unique difficulties, such as the danger of sexual assault and the tough decision of whether to stay in crisis areas to report or to evacuate with their families.

Indeed, generally speaking, gender-based violence and other kinds of discrimination against women seemed to persist also in this latest conflict. Nonetheless, the conflict has caused widespread destruction with dire repercussions, especially for women and girls living in conflict-affected areas. Reports of sexual assault committed by Russian and Russian-led forces have surfaced in this bleak environment, giving a sad picture of unspeakable tragedies experienced by women. These crimes include horrifying rape threats directed not only at the victims but also at their family members, harsh beatings, electric shocks to the genitalia, forced nudity, and rape.

Disturbing reports suggest that elderly women in Russian-occupied cities risked execution after being raped or sadly took their own lives as a final choice, leaving women and girls in a condition of despair as a result of the invasion. Heart-breaking testimony further highlights the alarmingly high frequency of gang rapes, assaults committed under threat of violence, and sexual assaults committed even in the presence of young, impressionable children. The agony faced by numerous women and girls has been made worse by the restricted communication routes with regions governed by Russia. As a result, attempts to track and immediately respond to these atrocious acts of sexual abuse have been hampered.

Along with the horrific threat of sexual assault, the invasion has resulted in a number of setbacks that have had a significant negative impact on Ukraine's reproductive healthcare services for women. The difficulties faced by nursing mothers and expectant moms in obtaining essential prenatal and postnatal care have increased the hazards of delivery. As a direct result, there has been a significant rise in premature births across the country, as well as an alarming lack of sufficient medical care and infections, all of which have had a negative impact on women's reproductive health. The invasion's numerous impacts have also had a

significant impact on Ukraine's once-vibrant commercial surrogacy industry, which has been legal for a long time.

Reports have emerged of surrogate mothers being coerced to remain within the country until delivery, with threats of imprisonment looming over those who attempt to escape.

Surrogate-born infants also find themselves stuck inside Ukraine's borders, unable to depart legally due to a lack of requisite papers and practical difficulties. The effects transcend beyond Ukraine's borders as Russia considers plans to restrict reproductive freedom due to worries about population loss brought on by the protracted conflict.

In the face of an impending invasion, women residing in border towns and cities have shown incredible fortitude by actively seeking out training in self-defense and armament.

In cities like Ivano-Frankivsk, reports of war crimes, including sexual assaults by Russian soldiers on women and girls, prompted hundreds of women to sign up for gun safety classes. These projects are a testament to women's unflinching will to defend themselves, their families, and their country from the horrors of war. (Cundy, 2022)

When it comes to displacement, the majority of those leaving the fighting are often civilian women and children. Men between the ages of 18 and 60 are not permitted to leave the nation, which causes a considerable influx of women and children looking for protection. (UN Women) However, even as they look for safety, women in Ukraine and abroad experience prejudice and abuse.

Unsettling allegations about abuse against women and girls in refugee camps have come to light, compounding their precarious situation. In addition, issues with host matching and the spread of anti-abortion views have made things even more challenging for women refugees. People who identify as transgender or non-binary, who had experienced prejudice before the invasion, now face new challenges as a direct result of the current conflict. Before the invasion, hate crimes against LGBTQ+ persons in Ukraine had seen an alarming rise, putting these vulnerable people at even greater risk. For instance, trans women struggle with the choice of fleeing the country because of conscription into the military based on sex given at birth while also having their safety threatened and subjected to intrusive physical inspections at numerous checkpoints.

In light of this, LGBTQ+ organizations have bravely built shelters to offer protection and have voiced concerns about places with anti-gay laws in place.

A sobering reminder of the essential need for comprehensive initiatives to safeguard women's safety, well-being, and empowerment comes from the experiences of women during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The incidence of war crimes, especially sexual assault, calls for prompt attention and remediation. It is essential to defend reproductive rights, self-defence programs, and the security and welfare of women and girls in refugee and crisis circumstances. In order to lessen the enormous suffering faced by women in the face of such incomprehensible hardship, a practical, planned, and uncompromising strategy is required. A realistic evaluation of the difficulties experienced by women in conflict-affected areas is required in light of the horrific realities of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is vital to pay attention to the prevalence of war crimes, especially sexual assault, with an emphasis on responsibility and justice. Furthermore, actionable steps and ongoing commitment from key stakeholders are needed to safeguard reproductive rights, support self-defence actions, and prioritize the security and well-being of women and girls in refugee circumstances. A future distinguished by true equality, justice, and the preservation of human dignity for everyone may be achieved by realizing the seriousness of the issue and taking prompt action.

In keeping with the aforementioned framework, the next portion of this thesis examines key advancements in international law that have had a substantial impact on how women are viewed in society. These changes may be categorized as tangible actions that have responsibly advanced women's rights and empowerment. By reporting these significant legal turning points that have drastically changed gender relations, I aim to shed light on the achievements and identify areas that need further attention, and ultimately foster a deeper understanding of the changing social role of women.

3.2 Jurisdictional Developments Regarding Women

Significant improvements in women's legal rights, notably in terms of political engagement, were made in the early 20th century. Global women's suffrage campaigns gained traction, and as a result, some nations gave women the right to vote. The Nineteenth Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, was adopted by the US in 1920. Before, the Representation of the People Act in the UK adopted the 1918 Canadian law granting women the right to vote. These adjustments marked a turning point in women's empowerment and engagement in politics and society.

Following, the United Nations established the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952, building on these previous accomplishments: this landmark international agreement acknowledged and upheld women's equal right to vote and run for office. The conference underlined the importance of women's political representation and involvement as crucial elements of a healthy democracy.

Adopted in 1979, the CEDAW stands for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The CEDAW is a comprehensive convention that aims to identify discrimination against women and provide ways to end it. The global bill of rights for women is another name for it. Aspects of women's lives that CEDAW covers include family life, employment, education, and political participation.

This significant declaration addressed crucial issues for women's rights and urged action to achieve gender equality.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, established in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women, was another significant worldwide milestone. This historic statement called for action to achieve gender equality and emphasized vital areas of concern for women's rights. It placed a strong emphasis on the value of economic opportunity, healthcare, and women's empowerment. The Beijing Declaration emphasized the need for governments, civil society groups, and international organizations to cooperate for the empowerment of women. (United Nations, 1995)

The creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 achieved substantial advancements in detecting and combating gender-based violence on the international justice front. By pursuing rape and sexual assault as war crimes and crimes against humanity, the ICTY established a precedent and emphasized the significance of holding those responsible for such atrocities during times of war accountable. This was a considerable advancement in acknowledging the distinctive challenges faced by women and pursuing justice on their behalf. (United Nations, 1993)

In addition, the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, established in 2000 by UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which I already reported in my previous chapter, stressed the greater involvement of women in efforts to prevent, resolve, and construct peace as well as the disparate effects of armed conflict on them. This program emphasized the need to safeguard women's rights and deal with gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas and urged for the inclusion of women's opinions in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, domestic abuse legislation has been under increasing scrutiny in recent years. Since domestic abuse is a widespread issue that needs legal solutions, several nations have passed laws that particularly target it. For instance, India adopted the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act in 2005, while the United Kingdom approved the Domestic Violence, Crime, and Victims Act in 2004. These legislative initiatives seek to protect and assist domestic abuse victims while also holding offenders responsible.

To increase the presence of women in decision-making organizations, several countries have implemented quotas or assigned seats.

For instance, Rwanda has one of the highest proportions of female MPs owing to a constitutional provision demanding a minimum of 30% female involvement.

Similar strategies to encourage women's political empowerment have also been adopted by Bolivia and Sweden.

Furthermore, several countries have placed a substantial emphasis on closing the gender wage gap. Globally, governments and groups have enacted laws, regulations, and awareness campaigns to advance pay fairness. These programs seek to close the gender pay gap by ensuring that women are compensated fairly for the same amount of labor that they perform. While tremendous progress has been achieved in expanding women's rights, there are still issues that need to be addressed. In many parts of the world, women continue to experience different types of discrimination, gender-based violence, and uneven access to opportunity. To build on the legislative advancements outlined in this section and overcome the remaining obstacles to achieve complete gender equality, ongoing efforts are required.

Finally, the legal advancements pertaining to women's social roles from 1914 to the present show a rising understanding of women's rights and the necessity of gender equality. Progress has been made in areas including suffrage, political participation, eliminating discrimination, addressing gender-based violence, and boosting women's representation through international treaties, conventions, and national law. To guarantee that women's social development continues to advance and that their rights are entirely upheld and recognized everywhere, however, more has to be done.

3.3 Findings and Limitations

My research revealed that political institutions, economic conditions, and cultural norms all have a substantial impact on how women's social roles change and grow in difficult circumstances. Previous studies that have emphasized the influence of cultural elements on women's empowerment in war and post-conflict contexts provide validity to these findings. Research has also demonstrated that while political institutions and decision-making processes can be substantial hurdles to women's involvement and representation, economic possibilities and access to resources can have a beneficial influence on women's empowerment.

Furthermore, my research revealed that because of the urgent demand for women's work and the breakdown of conventional gender norms, women's responsibilities might significantly shift during times of war or crisis.

However, if cultural, economic, and political circumstances do not support women's sustained empowerment once the crisis is over, their roles may return to more conventional ones. This is in line with other research that demonstrated how fragile and easily reversed increases in women's empowerment during times of crisis may be.

My research also uncovered a number of obstacles and chances that women who want to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in times of war and catastrophe must overcome. The lack of access to governmental decision-making processes, gender-based violence, unstable economies, migration, and displacement are some of these difficulties. Previous studies that have emphasized the effects of conflict on women's security, economic prospects, and political engagement provide validity to these conclusions.

However, my research also revealed that women have distinctive viewpoints and experiences that might help create inclusive and durable peace accords. Women's groups have been crucial in advancing women's rights and fostering peace. It has been demonstrated that women's participation in peace discussions increases the chance of a lasting peace.

A comprehensive and inclusive strategy is required for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in war and crisis contexts, according to the policy and programmatic implications of my work for policymakers and practitioners. Women should be included in decision-making processes, have access to economic possibilities, and policies and programs should address gender-based violence.

Additionally, they should consider the cultural setting and make sure that women's rights are not disregarded or forgotten while resolving disputes and fostering peace. In order to bring about long-lasting change, policymakers and practitioners should prioritize gender mainstreaming and concentrate on the political and economic empowerment of women.

Previous research that advocated for a more gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution supports these policy and programmatic implications. According to my study, the empowerment of women in war and crisis situations may also be positively impacted by initiatives that address gender-based violence, offer economic possibilities, and encourage women's involvement in decision-making processes.

Finally, the study's weaknesses should also be highlighted, along with potential future research topics. My study's primary focus on women's experiences in war and crisis situations meant that alternative gender identities or the viewpoints of males were not examined, which is one of its limitations. By researching the effects of war and emergencies on various gender identities and analysing their experiences and views, future research may close this gap.

My study's concentration on a particular collection of case studies means that its conclusions may not be transferable to other situations, which is another drawback. However, in order to be able to generalize the discourse engaged in the dissertation, I purposely analysed three contexts far from each other, with different cultures and eras.

The research also focuses on women's experiences, which, while important, does not give a whole picture of the intricacies of gender and conflict.

Despite these drawbacks, my research offers important insights into the elements that influence women's social positions under difficult circumstances. It emphasizes how important it is for practitioners and policymakers to consider how cultural, economic, and political issues affect how women perceive conflict and crisis situations. Furthermore, my research emphasizes the value of a comprehensive strategy for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment that takes into account how race, ethnicity, and other characteristics intersect with gender.

My research adds to a growing corpus of literature on gender and conflict that has underlined the need to promote women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives as well as in decision-making processes. My research's conclusions support this tactic by

highlighting the value of women's unique perspectives and life experiences in creating inclusive and durable peace agreements.

Conclusion

Considering the roles of women in four different contexts—World War I, World War II, the Syrian War, and the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict of 2022—this dissertation has presented a thorough understanding of the complex link between women and combat. The research has demonstrated the important influence of governing bodies, economic circumstances, and cultural conventions on women's social roles within the setting of war by analysing these many scenarios.

This study has shown the significant impact of gendered norms and stereotypes on women's empowerment via thorough research and analysis. The case study on the European Union has emphasized the complexity of gender dynamics in determining the advancement of women both during and after periods of war.

These results support earlier studies that emphasized the impact of cultural elements on women's empowerment, giving this dissertation's conclusions a greater importance.

This research has also improved current understanding of the interactions between contextual elements and women's social development by focusing on distinct settings of warfare. The examination of these examples has shed important light on the ways that political structures, economic circumstances, and cultural norms influence the positions and possibilities available to women during times of conflict.

Finally, to further advance our knowledge in this field, future research should explore additional contexts and expand our understanding of how to create inclusive societies that recognize and support the valuable contributions of women during and after times of conflict.

Riassunto in Italiano

Il passato e la storia delle donne sono caratterizzati da disparità di trattamento, opportunità ridotte e aspettative sociali che hanno sempre ostacolato il loro potenziale. Il loro approccio e la loro risposta a questi comportamenti hanno reso la loro posizione sociale una fonte di preoccupazione e interesse per millenni. Il primo capitolo di questa tesi esamina la posizione sociale delle donne durante la Prima e la Seconda Guerra Mondiale.

Per cominciare, presento una sintesi dell'epoca storica, evidenziando l'importanza e le conseguenze della crociata delle suffragette sulla posizione sociale e sulla partecipazione politica delle donne. La concessione del diritto di voto alle donne fu sancita in numerosi Paesi grazie all'impegno di questo movimento politico, una fazione di sostenitrici che si batteva per la prerogativa femminile di esprimere il proprio voto. Promuovendo i diritti politici delle donne e il loro impegno attivo nella vita pubblica, quest'ultime hanno messo in discussione le norme di genere convenzionali. La posizione sociale e la funzione delle donne nella società si sarebbero modificate in seguito all'ondata di cambiamenti portato dal movimento delle suffragette. Successivamente, mi soffermo anche sul modo in cui le donne furono utilizzate per la propaganda e su come la loro immagine fu sfruttata e commercializzata durante la guerra. La propaganda, infatti, fu inizialmente utilizzata dai governi e da altri gruppi per arruolare il pubblico, promuovere un senso di identità nazionale e difendere le operazioni militari. Per la prima volta, le donne furono associate ad allegorie di libertà, successo ed equità in quanto i governi cercavano di collegare queste qualità alla rettitudine della causa del Paese.

Nonostante ciò, gli stereotipi e le aspettative di genere di quel periodo sono stati rafforzati in numerosi casi in cui le donne sono state mostrate come eroine e assistenti. Difatti, poiché lavoravano in diversi settori, tra cui fabbriche, ospedali ed esercito, i compiti reali delle donne durante la guerra spesso si discostavano da queste rappresentazioni. A seguire, esploro anche l'impatto della guerra sulle donne, in particolare il modo in cui questa ha cambiato significativamente la posizione sociale

ed economica delle donne, sia positivamente che non. Con l'assenza degli uomini nella forza lavoro durante le prime due guerre mondiali, il ruolo delle donne aumentò di conseguenza rendendole man mano sempre più indipendenti. Tuttavia, le loro opportunità di lavoro si ridussero sostanzialmente quando gli uomini tornarono a casa e rientrarono nella forza lavoro dopo la fine delle guerre. Le conquiste ottenute durante la guerra furono quasi annullate e la posizione economica e sociale delle donne tornò a dipendere dagli uomini. Di conseguenza, anche la salute e il benessere delle donne subirono un impatto significativo dal conflitto, poiché sperimentarono livelli particolarmente elevati di stress, traumi e malattie. Infine, esamino se lo stesso problema si sia riproposto durante le due guerre mondiali, confrontando il trattamento riservato alle donne nei due intervalli storici.

Infatti, sebbene vi sono numerosi parallelismi e distinzioni sostanziali tra le due epoche, vi sono anche molte differenze. Il numero di donne che lavorano è aumentato durante entrambe le guerre, ma il tipo di lavoro svolto è cambiato. Durante la Prima Guerra Mondiale le donne lavoravano in settori tradizionalmente femminili, come l'assistenza infermieristica e il lavoro amministrativo, mentre durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale lavoravano in settori inizialmente strettamente riservati agli uomini, come la manifattura, l'edilizia e le forze armate. Inoltre, la propaganda utilizzata durante i due conflitti era diversa, con la Seconda Guerra Mondiale che presentava un'immagine più “*sfumata*” delle donne.

Il secondo capitolo analizza come la posizione sociale delle donne sia cambiata nell'ultimo secolo, concentrandosi sulla guerra civile siriana del 2011. In questa sezione analizzo le strazianti esperienze delle donne siriane durante la crisi, insieme al loro coinvolgimento nelle attività politiche ed economiche. In effetti, le donne siriane hanno sopportato diverse avversità durante la crisi, che vanno dalla violenza di genere, al trasferimento e all'instabilità economica. Ciononostante, hanno anche contribuito in modo significativo ai tentativi di promuovere i diritti delle donne e di favorire la pace durante il processo di risoluzione del conflitto. Come riporto lungo l'intero capitolo,

l'essenzialità della partecipazione delle donne nel contesto della risoluzione delle controversie è indubbia. In seguito, analizzo a fondo il problema della violenza di genere e il modo in cui quest'ultima ha avuto un impatto su questa comunità. Come ho già detto, le donne siriane hanno subito una serie di violenze sia fisiche che psicologiche, che vanno dalla violenza sessuale, ai matrimoni forzati e al traffico di esseri umani. Essendo le donne socialmente più esposte a questi rischi, in quanto considerate continuamente più deboli e sessualizzate, la violenza di genere è notoriamente comune in questi contesti. Il conflitto civile in Siria ha prodotto una catastrofe complicata e prolungata che ha ampliato le disparità di genere e aggiunto nuovi tipi di violenza contro le donne. Oltre a parlare delle difficoltà che le donne siriane hanno vissuto durante la crisi, analizzo anche come hanno contribuito a stabilire la pace. In passato, le donne non hanno partecipato ai colloqui di pace, ma negli ultimi anni si è diffusa la consapevolezza dell'importanza di coinvolgere le donne nelle negoziazioni finali. I punti di vista e le esperienze di vita delle donne possono contribuire a creare accordi di pace più inclusivi e duraturi. In Siria le donne hanno partecipato attivamente ai tentativi di promuovere la pace, organizzando campagne, proteste e lottando per la loro inclusione in questo ambito. Tuttavia, il loro coinvolgimento è ancora minimo e incontrano tutt'oggi notevoli ostacoli a una partecipazione efficace.

Proprio per quest'ultima affermazione, nella sezione successiva intraprendo un'indagine più specifica sulle dinamiche interne alle entità governative, soprattutto l'UE e l'UNDP, analizzando la loro composizione attraverso una prospettiva di genere. L'Unione europea e il Programma delle Nazioni Unite per lo Sviluppo (UNDP) si sono entrambi impegnati a promuovere l'uguaglianza di genere e l'emancipazione femminile, ma i loro approcci e obiettivi principali variano.

L'UE ha stabilito programmi e politiche con una forte enfasi sul *mainstreaming* di genere per includere le prospettive di genere in tutti gli aspetti delle sue operazioni. D'altro canto, il Programma delle Nazioni Unite per lo Sviluppo (UNDP) ha un

approccio più mirato, che pone l'accento sull'*empowerment* politico ed economico delle donne. Il contrasto tra queste due istituzioni vuole dimostrare quanto l'uguaglianza di genere sia concepita e trattata in modo diverso, e spesso ignorata.

L'ultimo capitolo invece sposta l'attenzione sul presente, basandosi sulle analisi dei capitoli precedenti sui ruoli sociali delle donne nei contesti storici della Prima, della Seconda e della Guerra di Siria. In particolare, esamina i progressi giuridici favorevoli che hanno influenzato le posizioni delle donne nel corso del tempo, con un focus su un conflitto più attuale, ovvero la battaglia Russo-Ucraina iniziata a febbraio 2022. In questa sezione finale, inoltre, analizzerò i risultati del mio studio e trarrò alcune conclusioni su come le avversità tra i due sessi influenzino i ruoli sociali delle donne. Attraverso questa indagine, voglio dimostrare come una serie di elementi, tra cui le istituzioni politiche, le condizioni economiche e le norme culturali, abbiano un effetto sulla formazione e sullo sviluppo delle posizioni sociali delle donne.

Prendendo in considerazione il ruolo delle donne in quattro contesti diversi - la Prima guerra mondiale, la Seconda guerra mondiale, la guerra siriana e il conflitto russo-ucraino del 2022 - questa tesi ha presentato una comprensione approfondita del complesso legame tra donne e combattimento. Analizzando questi numerosi scenari, la ricerca ha dimostrato l'importante influenza degli organi di governo, delle circostanze economiche e delle convenzioni culturali sui ruoli sociali delle donne nell'ambito della guerra.

Questo studio mostra l'impatto significativo delle norme e degli stereotipi di genere sull'*empowerment* femminile attraverso ricerche e analisi approfondite. Il caso di studio sull'Unione Europea sottolinea infatti la complessità delle dinamiche di genere nel determinare l'avanzamento delle donne sia durante che dopo i periodi di guerra.

Questi risultati supportano studi precedenti che hanno enfatizzato l'impatto degli elementi culturali sull'*empowerment* delle donne, dando maggiore importanza alle conclusioni di questa tesi. Questa ricerca ha anche migliorato l'attuale comprensione delle interazioni tra elementi contestuali e sviluppo sociale delle donne. L'esame di

questi esempi ha portato una luce importante sul modo in cui le strutture politiche, le circostanze economiche e le norme culturali influenzano le posizioni e le possibilità a disposizione delle donne durante i conflitti.

Infine, per far progredire ulteriormente le nostre conoscenze in questo campo, la ricerca futura dovrebbe esplorare altri contesti e ampliare la nostra comprensione di come creare società inclusive che riconoscano e sostengano il prezioso contributo delle donne durante e dopo i periodi di conflitto.

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