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**Impact of Authoritarianism and Democracy on Gender
(In)equality
-Master thesis-**

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Abbreviations

EIU	The Economist Intelligence Unit
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEI	Gender Equity Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measurements
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GGGR	Global Gender Gap Report
GGI	Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
IAW	International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
Ifeminism	Individualist Feminism
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TWU	Turkish Women's Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
WEF	World Economic Forum

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Introduction

Since 2000, gender equality has been a central part of UN work among UNDP and UN partners, subsequently established as a fifth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDGs) in 2015. (Goal 5: Gender Equality, 2018). Furthermore, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security has been an important document, which led to nine more resolutions, paving and further expanding the area of work on the matter. There is no doubt that gender equality is in the mainstream arena. One cannot deny its remarkable success, yet also cannot leave it unquestioned. Since emancipative values are one of the core democratic values, gender equality plays an essential part in democratization. However, due to the democratic mimicking and co-optation used by authoritarian states among its other techniques of preserving the regime, gender equality seems to attract more prejudice, misunderstandings, and even vagueness. The leading example of such a negative impact is evident with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention), which has been at the heart of the ongoing quarrels initiated by pseudo-democratic countries. Existing for ten years now, Istanbul Convention and the 2021 April meeting between European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan deserve to be delegated with a section in this thesis, considering the evident gender discrimination.

I. Theoretical Framework

The thesis aims to determine the level of currently achieved equality compared to the harmful effects of authoritarianism on gender equality, resulting in gender inequality. Moreover, the thesis is supposed to acknowledge the consequence of democratization's apparent stagnation on the further achievement of gender equality. In other words, the thesis is supposed to provide an answer to a research question - 'How have both authoritarianism and democracy affected the concept of gender (in)equality?'

The thesis' theoretical framework is aiming to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Autocrats exploit gender equality agenda for their own benefit of establishing democratic façade. It has been noticed that autocratic leaders regularly exploit *unsophisticated sexist Western views on women's political participation in which women are assumed to be a*

monolithic group, and greater representation of women in politics assumed to be unconditionally synonymous with democracy. (Bardall & Author, 2015). Yet, this hypothesis is ought to expand this view by highlighting the danger of autocratic technique of impersonating the gender equality agenda by introducing gender quotas or by only integrating a pro-women rhetoric to mobilize female votes (in cases where elections are a symbolic endeavor rather than a democratic practice). In other cases, this hypothesis will be observed from a prism of including women in autocratic governments in order to send a message of modernization or simply being up to date with current agendas, but still in goals of preserving the regime.

H2: ‘Women question’ tends to fade away in contemporary world. This hypothesis is ought to open a discussion about the tendency to replace the word *women* with gender, when discussing women-related issues. Furthermore, it proposes the need of integrating ‘women question’ - a term which was used mainly for the purposes of the suffrage movement - in the modern discussions of the contemporary unclosed women issues. Finally, it points out why being the way it currently is, gender equality agenda cannot be successful in more conservative countries. As Sonja Lokar, a Slovenian sociologist, specialist in political party development, social welfare state issues and gender issues, stated:

I think there is a tendency to immerse the woman first into gender and then gender into antidiscrimination. Actually, it was about trying to reduce the importance of gender equality to the smallest possible level, which is being done systematically. [...] Further, when women’s politics became the politics of equal opportunity – this was only cushioning, masking, and was not common only in Slovenia, or even only in Europe, but it is a world trend. In fact, to a great extent, the concept of gender is starting to blur the important questions. [...] These are no longer women’s studies – they are gender studies, and which theme is at present most important? Men’s studies. (As cited in Van der Vleuten et al., 2015, p. 48.).

The hypothesis is rather difficult to prove in the scope of the current thesis, but it will be discussed for the purposes to determine if there is a connection between feminism’s stigmatization and finding a rather neutral way to discuss ‘women-question’ outside the suffrage movements in the contemporary world.

Therefore, the thesis includes the summary of political theory on feminism, discussions on autocratic tendencies to preserve the regime and its influence on gender equality, as well as a

view on gender quotas and feminists' criticism of democracy. However, in order to get to the theoretical part of the thesis and examine the correctness of above-mentioned hypotheses, an evaluation of empiric data on current gender (in)equality statistics is needed.

II. Methodological Framework

The thesis is written on the basis of quantitative and qualitative research based on the empirical data, derived from the Gender Inequality Index (GII), the Gender Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), UNDP's Gender-related Development Index (GDI), Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI), Social Institutions and Gender Index of OECD Development Centre, Political Gender Equality and the Global State of Democracy Indices, etc., in comparison to the theoretical claims, aiming at finding an appropriate conclusion to the research question – Where does gender equality stand today both in democratic and autocratic world? The countries that are mentioned and discussed in the thesis the most are Nordic countries (Norway and Sweden) considering their successful model of achieving gender equality, but also Saudi Arabia due to the recent spread of 'modernizing' reforms by the Crown Prince. Furthermore, Russia and Turkey are discussed from the angle of the path of emancipation in early 20th centuries in comparison to today's situation. These discussions are the central part of the thesis due to its explanation of how 'women question' evolved to 'gender equality' and how in the process manipulative games were born to use this rather important issue for the purposes of preserving the regime rather than to reduce gender gaps.

In order to encircle the entire thesis into one whole, the quantitative research follows up the above-mentioned hypotheses from the qualitative research for the purpose of looking at the overall importance of mentality, patriarchal upbringing and cultural values of non- or pseudo-democratic countries, which make the attaining of gender equality look impossible in terms of western standards.

First Part

The Emergence, Aims and Analysis of Comparative Gender Equality Indices

Before diving into the analysis of specific gender indices, which will be discussed a bit later, it is important to point out the main subjects surrounding gender indices such as what they are, why should they be developed, as well as discuss the political issue regarding what exactly should be measured with gender indices. Only then will it be useful to analyze specific indices and their dashboards.

1. The World of Definitions

The definition of the word ‘indicators’ says that indicators are criteria or measures against which changes can be assessed (Imp-Act 2005). They may be pointers, facts, numbers, opinions or perceptions - used to signify changes in specific conditions or progress towards particular objectives (CIDA, 1997, as cited in UNDP, 2007). Gender indicators that can also be named as gender-responsive or gender-sensitive indicators, measure gender-related changes over time:

Gender indicators can refer to quantitative indicators based on sex disaggregated statistical data – which provides separate measures for men and women on literacy, for example. Gender indicators can also capture qualitative changes – for example, increases in women’s levels of empowerment or in attitude changes about gender equality. Measurements of gender equality might address changes in the relations between men and women, the outcomes of a particular policy, programme or activity for women and men, or changes in the status or situation of men and women, for example, levels of poverty or participation. (UNDP, 2007).

1.1. How can gender be measured?

The main answer to this question is via qualitative and quantitative approach. These are two methodological ways to measuring gender issues, and it may be an obvious answer. However, when it comes to quantitative approach, especially when focusing primarily on indices, then the obvious way of measuring gender equality is through assessing the quantitative data on questions such as percentages of women and men in parliament, male and female wage rates or

school enrollment rates for girls and boys, etc. (UNDP, 2007). But it might not be enough. Hence, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach is a must. Furthermore, it should be noted how quantitative data may be focused on assessing people's mindset on specific topic and as such it may help understand if a shift has been made. For example:

Program H evaluates attitude changes resulting from project activities using Gender - equitable Men Scale. Indicators were developed in the form of a scale of questions about attitudes. Attitude questions or statements include affirmations of traditional gender norms, such as: 'Men are always ready to have sex' and 'There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten', as well as assertions of more gender-equitable views, such as, 'A man and a woman should decide together what type of contraceptive to use'. For each indicator, three potential answers are provided: I agree; I partially agree; I do not agree. This has proved useful to assess men's current attitudes about gender roles and to measure whether men have changed their attitudes over time. (Barker et al 2004, as cited in UNDP, 2007).

Furthermore, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has developed a matrix to assist qualitative interpretation of quantitative data. (UNDP, 2007). The example of question that is used in assessment of, for example, statistic on the proportion of women and men in parliament could be this one: Is there a correlation between the proportion of women candidates who stood for parliament and number of women who actually got in? How does this compare with the situation of men? (SDC 2006, p. 31, as cited in UNDP, 2007). The crucial point in evaluating gender themes via qualitative and quantitative techniques is understanding that quantitative methods are immensely important for addressing the gender disparities, while qualitative methods give a perspective on a more thorough examination of gender relations and issues that are more difficult to depict in hard-figures. The issues that are difficult to measure are primarily related to the gender dimensions of poverty or women's empowerment, as well as sensitive issues such as gender-based violence. (Moser, 2007).

1.2. Political aspects of measuring gender

In an overview report *Gender and Indices* by Annalise Moser, a UN gender and development specialist, it is noted how *gender-sensitive measurements are critical for building the case for taking gender (in)equality seriously*. However, it is also pointed out that *measurement techniques and data remain limited and poorly utilized, making it difficult to know if efforts are on track to achieve gender equality goals and commitments*. (Moser, 2007, p. 7). Indicators do

reflect the priorities of decision-makers, and when it comes to deciding what is ought to be measured, it is mainly done on political basis.

The calculations in UNDP's Gender-related Development Index (GDI) give strong weighting to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and hence the GDI is biased in favor of richer countries and privileges economic over social development. (UNRISD 2005, as cited in Moser, 2007). The choice of indicators, data collection methodologies and statistical analysis techniques can produce not only different kinds of data, but also different results. By choosing what and how to measure, the policymaker, advocate, researcher or practitioner can thus present the story he or she wants to tell. (Moser, 2007, p. 15).

2. Analyzing Gender Equality Indices

2.1.GDI & GEM

Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) have their roots in the Human Development Index (HDI), which was introduced by UNDP in 1990 as a way to part away from focusing on economic factors in the measurement of poverty and wellbeing. The HDI was successful because of its ability to be an alternative to measures of socioeconomic status based on gross domestic product (GDP), but it also failed because of inability to sex-disaggregate its indicators. (Moser, 2007). Therefore, in 1995, UNDP developed two instruments to complement the HDI. The two instruments were GDI and GEM, and both of these are comprised of three indicators, and the greater the disparity between women and men, the lower country's GDI & GEM are compared with its HDI.

The three indicators used to measure GDI are:

1. Long and healthy life (measured by male and female life expectancy at birth);
2. Knowledge (measured by male and female adult literacy and years of schooling);
3. Decent standard of living (measured by women's and men's share of earned income). (Moser, 2007, p. 36).

The GEM measures the gap between men and women along three equally weighted dimensions of empowerment:

1. Political participation and decision-making (measured by women's and men's share of parliamentary seats);
2. Economic participation and decision-making (measured by women's and men's share of professional and technical jobs, and share of administrative and managerial jobs);
3. Power over economic resources (measured by women's and men's share of earned income). (Moser, 2007, p. 36).

There is also a Gender Inequality Index (GII), measuring gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. *It measures the human development costs of gender inequality. Thus, the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.* (Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports, 2021).

2.2. GGI & GGGI

Even though GDI and GEM underwent an update in 2005 by UNDP, a new generation of indices have been developed in order to achieve an even more accurate measurements of gender (in)equality.

Certain indices redress some of the limitations [...]. For example, Social Watch's Gender Equity Index (GEI) enables the level of gender equity to be clearly ranked across different countries – unlike the GDI which can be used only in reference to the average (gender-neutral) level of wellbeing through HDI. The GEI combines indicators from both the GDI and GEM, with a separate gender equity rating estimated for three dimensions: education, participation in the economy, empowerment. (Social Watch 2005b as cited in Moser, 2007, p. 38).

The Gender Gap Index (GGI), however, was developed by the World Economic Forum as an innovation due to its new measurement techniques, combining both quantitative data with qualitative measures from the Executive Opinion Survey of the World Economic Forum, which is a survey consisting of 9 000 business leaders in 104 countries. (Moser, 2007, p. 38).

GGI indicators include the following:

- Economic participation: male and female unemployment levels, levels of economic activity, and remuneration for equal work;
- Economic opportunity: duration of maternity leave, percentage of wages paid during the covered period, number of women in managerial positions, availability of government-provided childcare, impact of maternity laws on the hiring of women, wage inequalities between men and women in the private sector;
- Political empowerment: number of female ministers, share of seats in parliament, women holding senior legislative and managerial positions, number of years a female has been head of state;
- Educational attainment: literacy rates, enrolment rates for primary, secondary and tertiary education, average years of schooling;
- Health and wellbeing: effectiveness of governments' efforts to reduce poverty and inequality, adolescent fertility rate, percentage of births attended by skilled health staff, and maternal and infant mortality rates. (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005 as cited in Moser, 2007, p. 39).

However, since 2006, the WEF has moved to the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). It is based on the GGI, but its purpose has been to create global awareness of the challenges posed by gender gaps. (The World Economic Forum, 2020).

2.3. Presenting the Gender (In)equality Indices' Results

2.3.1. GDI results for 2019

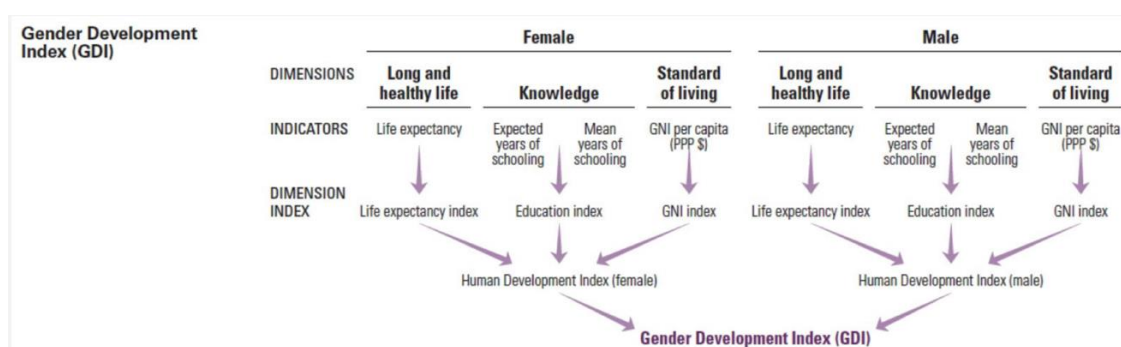


Figure 1. ¹ Gender Development Index (GDI)

¹ Gender Development Index (GDI) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 27, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>

The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures gender gaps in human development achievements by accounting for disparities between women and men in three basic dimensions of human development – health, knowledge and living standards using the same component indicators as in the HDI. (UNDP, 2021). The available and the most recent results of the GDI are for the year 2019. Considering the fact that GDI results cover more than 189 countries, only the first five countries of each group (*very high human development, high human development, medium human development, low human development*) are present in figures in order not to overextend the scope of the thesis. Nevertheless, some countries that are not present in the figures can be mentioned due to their specific results.

HDI rank	Country	Gender Development Index	Life expectancy at birth		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		Estimated gross national income per capita	
		Value	(years)		(years)		(years)		(2017 PPP \$)	
		2019	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
VERY HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
1	Norway	0,990	84,4	80,4	18,8	17,4	13,0	12,8	58.548	74.280
2	Ireland	0,981	83,9	80,7	18,8	18,6	12,9	12,4	55.540	81.401
2	Switzerland	0,968	85,6	81,9	16,2	16,4	12,7	13,6	57.840	81.137
4	Hong Kong, C	0,972	87,7	82,0	17,1	16,8	11,9	12,7	45.961	82.993
4	Iceland	0,969	84,5	81,5	20,2	18,0	12,6	13,0	46.413	62.883

Figure 2.² GDI Results for 2019 – Very High Human Development

HDI rank	Country	Gender Development Index	Life expectancy at birth		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		Estimated gross national income per capita	
		Value	(years)		(years)		(years)		(2017 PPP \$)	
		2019	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
67	Seychelles	..	77,4	69,9	15,3	13,1	9,9	10,1	..	..
67	Trinidad and Tobago	1,003	76,2	70,9	14,0	12,0	11,1	10,9	20.482	32.121
69	Albania	0,967	80,2	77,0	15,5	14,0	9,7	10,6	11.004	16.885
70	Cuba	0,944	80,8	76,8	14,7	13,9	11,2	11,8	5.714	11.567
70	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0,866	77,9	75,6	14,6	15,0	10,3	10,4	4.084	20.637

Figure 3.³ GDI Results for 2019 – High Human Development

HDI rank	Country	Gender Development Index	Life expectancy at birth		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		Estimated gross national income per capita	
		Value	(years)		(years)		(years)		(2017 PPP \$)	
		2019	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
MEDIUM HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
120	Kyrgyzstan	0,957	75,6	67,4	13,2	12,7	11,2	11,0	2.971	6.798
121	Morocco	0,835	77,9	75,4	13,3	14,1	4,7	6,6	2.975	11.831
122	Guyana	0,961	73,1	66,9	11,6	11,3	8,9	8,0	5.359	13.512
123	Iraq	0,774	72,7	68,6	10,4	12,2	6,0	8,6	2.427	18.975
124	El Salvador	0,975	77,8	68,5	11,5	11,7	6,6	7,3	6.471	10.501

² Gender Development Index (GDI) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 27, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>

³ Gender Development Index (GDI) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 27, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>

Figure 4. ⁴ GDI Results for 2019 – Medium Human Development

HDI rank	Country	Gender Development Index Value 2019	Life expectancy at birth		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		Estimated gross national income per capita (2017 PPP \$)	
			(years)		(years)		(years)			
			Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
			2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
157	Mauritania	0,864	66,5	63,3	8,7	8,5	3,8	5,6	2.782	7.468
158	Benin	0,855	63,3	60,2	11,4	13,8	2,4	5,5	2.837	3.673
159	Uganda	0,863	65,6	61,0	10,6	12,2	4,9	7,6	1.591	2.671
160	Rwanda	0,945	71,1	66,8	11,2	11,2	4,0	4,9	1.876	2.444
161	Nigeria	0,881	55,6	53,8	9,4	10,6	5,7	7,7	4.107	5.692

Figure 5. ⁵ GDI Results for 2019 – Low Human Development

The results in Figure 2. show that Norway, Ireland, Switzerland, Hong Kong China (SAR) and Iceland are the countries with the highest rank in human development, and these countries belong to the *Very High Human Development Group*. Life expectancy at birth for this group shows that women are expected to live longer than men. Yet, this factor is present in all groups, even in the *Low Human Development Group* (Figure 5.). The other reoccurring factor is seen in estimated gross national income per capita. All four groups depict that women's income is smaller than men's income. It is even seen in the *Very High Human Development Group*. This group, of course, shows bigger numbers - the life expectancy is longer for all people, expected years of schooling, etc. But the gap in gender related issues such as wages is still present. In other words, the only difference in the *Very High Human Development Group* is that the wages are bigger. But women still earn less than men. The smallest estimated gross national income per capita (female) is seen in *Medium Human Development Group* - Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Iraq (Figure 4.), then in *Low Human Development Group* - Mauritania, Benin, Uganda and Rwanda (Figure 5.). Furthermore, it is interesting to find Iran, an authoritarian and theocratic republic, in the *High Human Development Group*. Women's estimated national gross income in Iran, allegedly is 4,084 USD, while men's 20,637 USD. The gap is huge. Nigeria, on the other hand, being in the *Low Development Group* shows that estimated national gross income for women is 4,107 USD, which is more than in Iran. But men in Nigeria, earn less than in Iran. The estimated national gross income for men in Nigeria is 5,692 USD, which is more than what

⁴ Gender Development Index (GDI) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 27, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>

⁵ Gender Development Index (GDI) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 27, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi>

women earn in Nigeria, but less than what men earn in Iran. The life expectancy in Nigeria is only 55,6 years for women and 53,8 for men. In Latvia, a country in *High Human Development Group*, life expectancy at birth for women is 80 years, and for men 70 years. There are 10 years of gap, and as such it is the biggest gap shown in the statistics, related to the health dimension of human development.

The conclusion is evident, women live longer, but men earn more, no matter the HDI rank or the political regime.

2.3.2. GII results for 2019

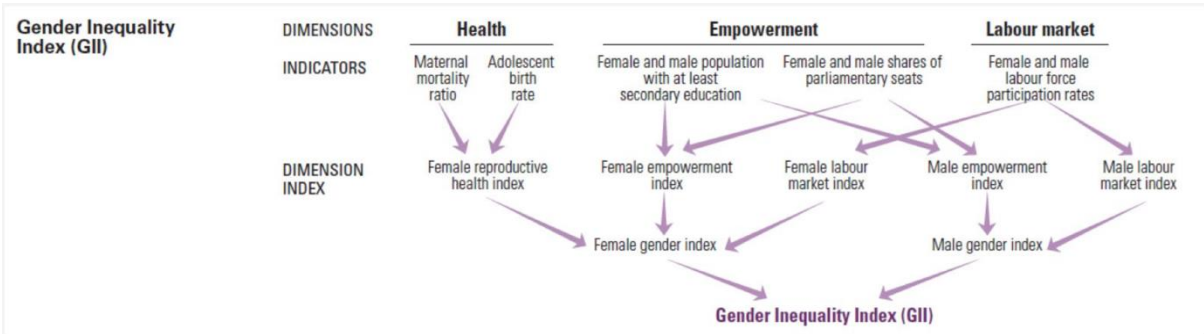


Figure 6.6 Gender Inequality Index (GII)

If GDI depicted gender related gaps, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development, as it has been noted in 2.1. *GDI & GEM*. Following are the results of GII for 2019, analyzed by the same principle as in the 2.3.1. section.

HDI rank	Country	Gender Inequality Index		SDG3.1	SDG3.7	SDG5.5	SDG4.4		Labour force participation rate	
		Value	Rank	Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)	Adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15–19)	Share of seats in parliament (% held by women)	Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and older)	Female	Male	Female	Male
		2019	2019	2017	2015-2020	2019	2015–2019	2015–2019	2019	2019
VERY HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
1	Norway	0,045	6	2	5,1	40,8	95,4	94,9	60,4	67,2
2	Ireland	0,093	23	5	7,5	24,3	81,9	79,9	56,0	68,4
2	Switzerland	0,025	1	5	2,8	38,6	95,6	96,8	62,9	73,8
4	Hong Kong	..	..	..	2,7	..	77,1	82,9	54,0	67,5
4	Iceland	0,058	9	4	6,3	38,1	100,0	100,0	70,8	79,2

Figure 7.7 GII Results for 2019 – Very High Human Development

⁶ Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

⁷ Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

		SDG3.1		SDG3.7	SDG5.5	SDG4.4		Labour force participation rate		
Gender Inequality Index		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Share of seats in parliament	Population with at least some secondary education					
Value		Rank	(deaths per 100,000 live births)	(births per 1,000 women ages 15–19)	(% held by women)	% ages 25 and older		% ages 15 and older		
HDI rank	Country	2019	2019	2017	2015-2020	2019	Female 2015–2019	Male 2015–2019	Female 2019	Male 2019
HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
67	Seychelles	..	..	53	62,1	21,2	..	..	..	..
67	Trinidad and Tobago	0,323	73	67	30,1	32,9	74,5	71,2	50,1	70,2
69	Albania	0,181	42	15	19,6	29,5	93,7	92,5	46,7	64,6
70	Cuba	0,304	67	36	51,6	53,2	85,8	89,1	40,7	66,8
70	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0,459	113	16	40,6	5,9	67,4	72,8	17,5	71,5

Figure 8.⁸ GII Results for 2019 – High Human Development

		SDG3.1		SDG3.7	SDG5.5	SDG4.4		Labour force participation rate		
Gender Inequality Index		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Share of seats in parliament	Population with at least some secondary education					
Value		Rank	(deaths per 100,000 live births)	(births per 1,000 women ages 15–19)	(% held by women)	% ages 25 and older		% ages 15 and older		
HDI rank	Country	2019	2019	2017	2015-2020	2019	Female 2015–2019	Male 2015–2019	Female 2019	Male 2019
MEDIUM HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
120	Kyrgyzstan	0,369	82	60	32,8	19,2	99,1	98,3	44,8	75,7
121	Morocco	0,454	111	70	31,0	18,4	29,1	36,0	21,5	70,1
122	Guyana	0,462	115	169	74,4	31,9	70,9	56,4	43,9	68,5
123	Iraq	0,577	146	79	71,7	25,2	39,5	56,5	11,6	74,2
124	El Salvador	0,383	85	46	69,5	31,0	39,9	46,4	45,3	75,7

Figure 9.⁹ GII Results for 2019 – Medium Human Development

		SDG3.1		SDG3.7	SDG5.5	SDG4.4		Labour force participation rate		
Gender Inequality Index		Maternal mortality ratio	Adolescent birth rate	Share of seats in parliament	Population with at least some secondary education					
Value		Rank	(deaths per 100,000 live births)	(births per 1,000 women ages 15–19)	(% held by women)	% ages 25 and older		% ages 15 and older		
HDI rank	Country	2019	2019	2017	2015-2020	2019	Female 2015–2019	Male 2015–2019	Female 2019	Male 2019
LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT										
157	Mauritania	0,634	151	766	71,0	20,3	12,7	25,0	28,9	63,1
158	Benin	0,612	148	397	86,1	7,2	18,3	33,9	68,8	73,0
159	Uganda	0,535	131	375	118,8	34,9	27,5	35,1	67,0	73,9
160	Rwanda	0,402	92	248	39,1	55,7	10,9	15,8	83,9	83,4
161	Nigeria	..	..	917	107,3	4,1	..	..	47,9	57,9

Figure 10.¹⁰ GII Results for 2019 – Low Human Development

If one compares Norway, being ranked #1 (Figure 7.), to Iraq, which is #123 with 0,577 GII (Figure 9.), it can be noticed that the differences are significant. Not only because Norway's GII 0,045. The GII's dimensions present the whole picture and some results are terrifying. For example, maternal mortality ratio of Norway shows that there are two deaths per 100,000 live

⁸ Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

⁹ Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

¹⁰ Gender Inequality Index (GII) | Human Development Reports. (n.d.). UNDP. Retrieved July 13, 2021, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

births. In Iraq, however, 79 women per 100,000 live births die while giving birth, while in Nigeria (Figure 10.) 917 women die per 100,000 live births. The adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women ages 15-19 during the years 2015-2020 shows that in Norway the rate of such births is 5,1 which is the same as in Sweden that is six places below Norway. Yet, Sweden shows slightly higher percentage of female share of seats in parliament (47,3%) than in Norway (40,8%). While, Rwanda, a country of *Low Human Development Group*, with GII 0,402, has 55,7% of seats in parliament taken by women. This is the highest result out of all examined countries. Rwanda's labor force participation rate in the age category 15 and older is 83,9% for women and 83,4% for men. Another interesting occurrence is in Latvia's, Canada's, Luxemburg's and Estonia's percentages of population with at least some secondary education. Both male and female percentages are 100%. Norway's percentages in this sphere are 95,4% for women and 94,9% for men, while in the United States of America 96,1% of women 25 and older have some secondary education and 96,0% of men.

In comparison to GDI, GII does show the evident inequality present in some states more than in others. Yet, GDI was blunter with showing gender-related gaps. While GII presents *Very High Human Development and High Human Development Groups* in a brighter light, the GDI gave a realistic perception of still evidently present gaps between men and women in democratic countries.

2.3.3. *Women's Empowerment – HDR 2021*

The Gender Empowerment Measurements or GEM was not present in its usual way in the Human Development Report 2021 as in previous HDRs. This time around, there can be found a Women's Empowerment Dashboard with statistics for the years 2005 - 2019 / 2009 - 2019. (Figure 11.).

Women's empowerment

Country groupings (terciles): [Top third](#) [Middle third](#) [Bottom third](#)

Three-colour coding is used to visualize partial grouping of countries by indicator. For each indicator countries are divided into three groups of approximately equal size (terciles): the top third, the middle third and the bottom third. Aggregates are colour coded using the same tercile cutoffs. See *Notes* after the table.

HDI RANK	SDG 3.1				SDG 3.7, 5.6		SDG 5.6		SDG 5.3		SDG 5.2		SDG 5.2		SDG 5.5			SDG 1.3
	Reproductive health and family planning				Violence against girls and women				Socioeconomic empowerment									
	Antenatal care coverage, at least one visit	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Contraceptive prevalence, any method	Unmet need for family planning	Child marriage	Prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting among girls and women	Violence against women ever experienced*	Share of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics programmes at tertiary level, female	Share of graduates from science, technology, engineering and mathematics programmes in tertiary education who are female	Female share of employment in senior and middle management	Women with account at financial institution or with mobile money-service provider	Mandatory paid maternity leave						
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(% of women ages 20-24 who are married or in union)	(% of girls and women ages 15-49)	(% of female population ages 15 and older)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(% of female population ages 15 and older)	(days)						
	2009-2019 ^a	2014-2019 ^a	2009-2019 ^a	2009-2019 ^a	2005-2019 ^a	2004-2018 ^b	2005-2019 ^a	2005-2019 ^a	2009-2019 ^a	2009-2019 ^a	2009-2019 ^a	2017				2019		
Very high human development																		
1	..	99.2	..	..	..	..	27.0	..	10.9	28.5	32.8	100.0	..	..	..	..
2	..	99.7	73.3	..	..	..	15.0	5.0	14.1	29.0	31.3	95.3	182	..	..	..
2	..	..	71.6	..	..	..	..	..	11.4	22.3	32.5	98.9	98	..	..	..
4	..	..	66.7	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	94.7	70	..	..	..
4	..	98.2	..	..	..	..	22.4	..	10.3	35.2	44.0	..	90	..	..	..
6	..	98.8	80.3	..	..	..	22.0	7.0	19.2	27.6	28.6	99.2	98	..	..	..
7	..	..	..	..	..	..	28.0	12.0	15.7	35.5	41.9	100.0	..	..	..	..
8	..	96.7	66.9	..	..	..	22.8	10.0	10.2	32.1	..	99.2	..	..	..	..
8	..	..	73.0	..	..	..	25.0	12.0	8.7	29.3	26.0	99.8	112	..	..	..
10	..	95.3	..	..	..	..	32.0	11.0	12.7	34.2	26.6	100.0	126	..	..	..
High human development																		
67	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.9	31.6	47.4	..	112	..	..	..
67	95.1	100.0	40.3	24.3	11	..	30.2	19.0	..	..	..	73.6	98	..	..	..
69	88.4	99.8	46.0	15.1	12	..	21.0	1.3	15.2	46.7	41.3	38.1	365	..	..	..
70	98.5	99.9	73.7	8.0	26	..	..	..	6.1	39.9	..	..	..	..	..	..
70	96.9	99.0	77.4	5.7	17	..	..	..	31.5	31.2	..	91.6	270	..	..	..
72	98.8	99.5	61.7	7.5	10	..	..	..	..	40.6	22.5	73.4	118	..	..	..
73	87.0	99.9	45.8	9.0	4	..	11.0	1.0	16.1	44.5	25.4	54.7	365	..	..	..
74	..	100.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.6	40.9	..	..	90	..	..	..
74	98.5	96.4	73.1	13.0	26	..	24.6	38.8	14.5	30.6	35.5	33.3	84	..	..	..
74	..	100.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	91	..	..	..
Medium human development																		
120	99.8	99.8	39.4	19.0	13	..	26.6	0.1	11.3	31.3	..	38.9	126	..	..	..
121	88.5	86.6	70.8	11.3	14	..	..	..	17.8	45.3	..	16.8	98	..	..	..
122	90.7	95.8	33.9	28.0	30	..	..	..	5.2	27.2	38.5	..	91	..	..	..
123	87.6	95.6	52.8	14.3	28	7.4	..	..	..	..	..	19.5	98	..	..	..
124	96.0	99.9	71.9	11.1	26	..	14.3	..	8.9	23.1	43.1	24.4	112	..	..	..
125	91.8	94.8	29.3	22.7	9	..	26.4	..	..	..	..	42.1	140	..	..	..
126	..	92.4	..	..	18	..	12.6	..	10.6	42.4	..	..	60	..	..	..
127	91.3	69.8	60.6	13.9	30	..	21.2	..	5.4	34.7	34.5	42.1	84	..	..	..
128	94.7	96.0	80.4	5.8	35	..	22.5	..	..	..	53.7	24.8	84	..	..	..
129	97.9	96.2	65.6	11.7	26	..	15.1	5.8	..	..	..	27.7 ^e	56	..	..	..
Low human development																		
159	97.3	74.2	41.8	26.0	34	0.3	49.9	..	..	..	25.5	52.7	84	..	..	..
160	97.6	90.7	53.2	18.9	7	..	37.1	..	12.1	35.4	33.2	45.0	84	..	..	..
161	67.0	43.3	27.6	23.1	43	19.5	17.4	1.5	..	..	28.9	27.3	84	..	..	..
162	93.2	73.6	23.3	26.5	27	36.7	25.9	..	..	..	22.2	35.6	98	..	..	..
163	98.0	63.5	38.4	22.1	31	10.0	46.2	..	..	..	17.3	42.2	84	..	..	..
164	85.1	46.0	44.3	16.4	40	..	..	..	14.9	31.0	24.5	16.3	98	..	..	..
165	91.3	86.6	64.9	16.0	16	..	..	..	6.4	24.8	..	46.5	84	..	..	..
166	87.7	..	19.0	..	5	94.4	..	..	..	..	..	8.8 ^c	98	..	..	..
167	77.9	69.4	23.9	34.0	25	3.1	25.1	..	..	..	29.5	37.6	98	..	..	..
168	97.1	74.2	27.8	21.9	29	24.0	21.5	..	..	..	..	38.4	98	..	..	..

Figure 11.¹¹ Human Development Report 2021: Women's Empowerment

The Dashboard shows three main assessed indicators – *reproductive health and family planning*, *violence against girls and women*, and *socioeconomic empowerment*. (Figure 11.).

For some indices such as *antenatal care coverage*; *unmet need for family planning* (reproductive health and family planning pillar); *women married by age 18*, *prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting among girls and women* (violence against girls and women)

¹¹ United Nations. (2021). Human Development Report 2020 [E-book]. UN.

have no data for majority of assessed countries. Maldives is the first country in the dashboard with present percentage for this subindex. Namely, 12.9% of girls and women aged 15-49 in Maldives, *High Human Development Country*, are victims of genital mutilation/cutting. In Egypt, *Medium Human Development Country*, the percentage is 87.2%. The *Low Human Development Country* – Mauritania – has 66.6% of girls and women, who have undergone genital mutilation/cutting, while Djibouti – 94.4%. The percentage in Somalia is the worst – 97.9%. (United Nations, 2021).

The fact that some data is not present may be seen as a good sign, but also as a bad sign. It cannot be concluded that genital mutilation/cutting is not present in Norway only because no numbers are present in the dashboard. Even though as per the previous results for Norway it is a logical step to conclude that it is not existent in Norway. The same goes for the subindex *contraceptive prevalence* or *women married by age 18*. No data again for Norway. Even in Ireland, there is no data for the percentage of women married by age 18. The same goes for Sweden, Germany, Australia, etc. One can see such occurrence as a positive factor, but it also cannot be denied that the low percentage may still be present. This is the negative side of statistics. Some data can be missing; hence a certain conclusion cannot be made.

Another rather confusing factor is the absence of percentages of proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel for *Very High Development Countries* such as Switzerland, Sweden, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, etc., while there is data for the *Low Human Development Countries* such as Rwanda (90.7%), Uganda (74.2%), Gambia (82.7%), etc. Yet, when the percentages are analyzed for all groups, no matter the amount of absent data for some countries, *Very High Human Development Group* wins with 98.9% for this subindex. Therefore, the dashboard is confusing and requires a thorough argumentation of presented data.

2.3.4. *GGGI Results: COVID-19 Edition*

As it has been pointed out in section 2.2. the Global Gender Gap Index *benchmarks the evolution of gender-based gaps among four key dimensions – Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment*. (World Economic Forum, 2021, p. 5). The 2021 Report focused on 156 countries, enabling cross-country comparison and prioritizing the most effective policies required for closing gender gaps.

The methodology of the index has remained stable since its original conception in 2006, providing a basis for robust cross-country and time-series analysis. The Global Gender Gap Index measures scores on a 0 to 100 scale and scores can be interpreted as the distance to parity (i.e., the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed). (World Economic Forum, 2021, p. 5).

The Global Gender Gap Index framework



Figure 12. ¹² **Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)**

The key findings of the Global Gender Gap Report 2021 (GGGR) show that *globally, the average distance completed to parity is at 68%, a step back compared to 2020 (-0.6 %). These figures are mainly driven by a decline in the performance of large countries. On its current trajectory, it will now take 135.6 years to close gender gap worldwide.* (World Economic Forum, 2021, p. 5). The gender gap in **Political Empowerment** is the largest. To date, 22% of the gap is closed. As a matter of fact, it further widened since the 2020 report:

Across 156 countries covered by the index, women represent only 26.1% of some 35,500 parliament seats and just 22.6% of over 3,400 ministers worldwide. In 81 countries, there has never been a woman head of state, as of 15 January 2021. (World Economic Forum, 2021, p. 5).

¹² World Economic Forum. (2021, March). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*.

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

The World Economic Forum estimates that it will take 145.5 years to attain gender parity in politics. However, it must be noted that in **Political Participation**, globally, there are more women in parliaments, and two countries – Togo in 2020 and Belgium in 2019 - have elected their first female prime ministers.

According to the 2021 GGGI results, the gender gap of the second-largest of four key groups, **Economic Participation and Opportunity**, has been closed up to 58%. The WEF estimates that it will take 267.6 years to close the gender gap of this group.

The slow progress seen in closing the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap is the result of two opposing trends. On one hand, the proportion of women among skilled professionals continues to increase, as does progress towards wage equality, albeit at a slower pace. On the other hand, overall income disparities are still only part-way towards being bridged and there is a persistent lack of women in leadership positions, with women representing just 27% of all manager positions. [...] Projections for a select number of countries show that gender gaps in labour force participation are wider since the outbreak of the pandemic. [...] (World Economic Forum, 2021, p. 5).

The good news is that gender gaps in **Educational Attainment and Health and Survival** are reportedly nearly closed. In Educational Attainment, 95% of this gender gap has been closed. WEF estimates that it will be fully closed in the next 14.2 years. The gender gap in Health and Survival is 96% closed. Yet, a marginal decline has been noticed, surprisingly, not because of COVID-19. Furthermore, the time to close this gap remains undefined.

Rank	Country	Gender gap closed to date
1	Iceland	89.2%
2	Finland	86.1%
3	Norway	84.9%
4	New Zealand	84.0%
5	Sweden	82.3%
6	Namibia	80.9%
7	Rwanda	80.5%
8	Lithuania	80.4%
9	Ireland	80.0%
10	Switzerland	79.8%

Figure 13. ¹³ GGGI Results 2021

The Figure 13. presents top ten gender-equal countries. Iceland has been number one for the 12th time. If one compares results to the previously examined UNDP indices, it can be noticed that HDI and its groups do not reflect gender-equality issues as the primary aspect of human development. Rwanda has closed up to 80.5% of gender gaps, and in HDR it was in the *Low Human Development Group*. Of course, the factors that put Rwanda in such group are understandable, but it may send a message that either gender-equality is not one of the main factors of human development or that Rwanda's gender equality agenda is forced due to different authoritarian reasons. Nevertheless, GGGI has been more precise and efficient in determining the current situation in terms of gender (in)equality.

Hence, according to GGGI, Western Europe remains the region that has progressed the most towards gender parity (77.6%). North America is the second-most advanced (76.4%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (71.2%) and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (71.1%). The East Asia and Pacific Region – 67.2%, while in South Asia – 62.3%. The Middle East and North Africa region remains the area with the largest gap – 60.9%.

¹³ World Economic Forum. (2021, March). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*.

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

At the current relative pace, gender gaps can potentially be closed in 52.1 years in Western Europe, 61.5 years in North America, and 68.9 years in Latin America and the Caribbean. In all other regions it will take over 100 years to close the gender gap: 121.7 years in Sub-Saharan Africa, 134.7 years in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 165.1 years in East Asia and the Pacific, 142.4 years in Middle East and North Africa, and 195.4 years in South Asia. (World Economic Forum, 2021, p. 7).

The GGGR also provides the results on the regional level. Since the second part of the thesis will cover some of the autocratic and lower-quality democracies' ways of mimicking gender equality, focusing on some countries situated in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, it is useful to present GGGI results for this region briefly in this part.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Country	Rank		Score
	Regional	Global	
Lithuania	1	8	0.804
Serbia	2	19	0.780
Latvia	3	20	0.778
Albania	4	25	0.770
Moldova	5	28	0.768
Belarus	6	33	0.758
Bulgaria	7	38	0.746
Slovenia	8	41	0.741
Croatia	9	45	0.733
Estonia	10	46	0.733
Montenegro	11	48	0.732
Georgia	12	49	0.732
North Macedonia	13	73	0.715
Ukraine	14	74	0.714
Poland	15	75	0.713
Bosnia and Herzegovina	16	76	0.713
Slovak Republic	17	77	0.712
Czech Republic	18	78	0.711
Kazakhstan	19	80	0.710
Russian Federation	20	81	0.708
Romania	21	88	0.700
Hungary	22	99	0.688
Azerbaijan	23	100	0.688
Kyrgyz Republic	24	108	0.681
Armenia	25	114	0.673
Tajikistan	26	125	0.650

Figure 14. ¹⁴ GGGI Results 2021

From Figure 14. it is seen that countries of Southern Europe are included into this group. Without further pinpointing on the reasons why the group was named the way it was, i.e., by neglecting the fact that some of the countries are not geographically defined as Eastern Europe in 2021, the focus will be on countries such as Lithuania, Hungary and Poland on one hand, and Belarus, Russia and Azerbaijan on the other.

¹⁴ World Economic Forum. (2021, March). *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

The report shows that Lithuania has closed the largest proportion of the gender gap (80.4%). It is the most improved country of this region, and it is ranked 8th on a global level. There is an interesting observation and comparison of change in the share of women in ministerial positions in Lithuania and Poland. In Lithuania the share of women-ministers has been increased from 0 to 42.9%, but in Poland it has been reduced from 27.3% to 4.8%. Hence, from the perspective of the whole region, the Political Empowerment subindex has seen the largest change, and it is the dimension with the greatest gender disparity – only 14.2% of the Political Empowerment has been closed. However, there are disparities in closing this gap between the countries of the region. Lithuania has closed 42.9% of the gap, Russian Federation only 8.5% and Azerbaijan 6.9%. Furthermore, in 13 of 26 countries of the region 20% of ministerial positions are held by women. In Azerbaijan the percentage is 0. In 21 of the 26 countries of the region, the share of women in parliament is around 20%. The interesting factor is that Belarus has the largest share – 40%, and Hungary the smallest 12.6%. Belarus is also taking a lead in closing the Economic Participation and Opportunity gap. It has closed 84%, which is the largest proportion of the gender gap on this subindex. (World Economic Forum, 2021).

3. *Summary of the First Part*

The first part of the thesis provided a detailed analysis of gender-related indices in order to bring forward the current statistical data on the gender (in)equality issues. The primary indices presented were those developed by the UNDP and the WEF, concluding that GGGI developed by the WEF has a better developed index and a more comprehensive report. Furthermore, this index depicts the gender gaps straightforwardly and as such it can be of a great contribution to this field. However, as it was pointed out in the section *1.2. Political aspects of measuring gender*, the results of whichever index cannot be taken as the only exact argument. Many factors influence the results of indices' reports, and as empiric as it gets, subjectivity may still be present from a researcher's decision on what they are going to measure on how exactly the numbers are going to be interpreted and in what context. Country's responsibility to track and submit the required data also plays a major role. Hence, the absence of data certainly sends a message and not always a positive one. INGOs are of course aware of this, hence every single report of such style has had a disclaimer saying that the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in the work do not necessarily reflect their views, and the presented data is a subject to change. It is evident that indices and quantitative approach in gender studies have its pros and cons, which is natural. Yet, one cannot deny the fact that no matter how many flaws or

confusions this approach has, the importance and ‘seriousness’ it brings to researching gender-related questions, in combination with the qualitative approach, is crucial to going forward in finding new ways of dealing with this issue.

Second Part

Mimicking Gender Equality

4. The Democracy Index 2020

Before transiting to the analysis of the qualitative data, another index has to be considered – the Democracy Index, developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (The EIU).

Democracy Index 2020, by regime type

	No. of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	23	13.8	8.4
Flawed democracies	52	31.1	41.0
Hybrid regimes	35	21.0	15.0
Authoritarian regimes	57	34.1	35.6

Figure 15.¹⁵ Democracy Index 2020

The Democracy Index is based on five categories: *electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture, civil liberties*. Every category has its range of indicators, and upon its results every country (165 are analyzed in the EIU Report) is classified in four types of regimes depicted in Figure 15. – *full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime, authoritarian regime*. (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). According to the results of the Democracy Index 2020, there are only 23 countries that

¹⁵ The Economist Intelligence Unit. (2021, January). Democracy Index 2020 In sickness and in health? https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/democracy-index-2020.pdf?mkt_tok=NzUzLVJJUS00MzgAAAF-kNUI6hyu0jGac9CucDEL44koAFZnyHurKy3zxNO4eBv0tcjyyU21JwKLOzCf7nzQ2rabE7KlfQ9T-EVwft6xzTprDQg6OGyA3HW5Q8slWK0qLQ

are considered to be *full democracies*, which is 8.4% of world population. There are 52 flawed democracies, 35 countries with hybrid regimes, and 57 countries with authoritarian regime.

In the methodology section of the report, where a brief description of four types of regimes is presented, gender equality is not explicitly mentioned, possibly due to the consideration that it is a part of 'civil liberty'. Full democracy, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, depicts a country with following characteristics:

Not only basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected, but which also tend to be underpinned by a political culture conducive to the flourishing of democracy. The functioning of government is satisfactory. Media are independent and diverse. There is an effective system of checks and balances. The judiciary is independent and judicial decisions are enforced. There are only limited problems in the functioning of democracies. (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021, p. 57).

The previous indices showed that gender-related issues vary from place to place, and there were couple of interesting findings of bigger gender gap closures in authoritarian countries such as Belarus. How reliable such results are and does political system influence gender equality correctly or another mimicking style is being developed by authoritarian states, which have been hiding their authoritarian tendencies less and less with the COVID-19 eruption and lockdown measures imposed everywhere, no matter the ruling regime?

4.1. Does political system influence gender equality?

One possible way to understand if political system influences gender equality is to go beyond the mainly observed women's representation in parliaments. (Tripp, 2013). There has to be a broader range of measures of gender equality. Furthermore, representation of women in legislatures cannot be the sole measure of women's advancement because of so many autocratic countries that have come up with quotas to improve women's representation in parliaments but without always adopting other more broader policies. (Tripp, 2013). Why would they do that? Because of pressure from UN system and other regional bodies. Such move does resemble a picture of some progress being made, but from today's point of view it is more comprehensible that such autocratic behavior does not play in favor of UN pressure for democratization but contrary, to autocrats themselves who shortly mimic playing the game by the rules just to eventually turn it the way they want it.

Socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union had quotas as part of their ethos of equality within a generally undemocratic order. Quotas may also serve symbolic purposes for the state or signal a modernist stance of the establishment or ruling party in the face of a populist Islamicist challenge. In other cases, quotas have been used to obtain women's votes, to create new patronage networks, or to cultivate national legitimacy on a world stage. (Tripp, 2013, p. 2).

Autocracies do not introduce these quotas with a purpose to promote gender equality, hence the representation of women in parliament cannot and should not be seen as a significant factor of change. Furthermore, women who have been delegated with a certain position in parliaments of such countries do not have space for doing the job correctly, besides supporting the relevant regime.

Women were better represented in legislatures than in most parts of the world, but their real political power was limited. In the Soviet Union women were almost completely excluded from the key policy-making institutions like the All-Union Central Committees and state Council of Ministers (Moses 1977). Thus, women's impressively high level of representation in the Soviet era were somewhat illusory in that they did not reflect the real nature and extent of women's political involvement. (Tripp, 2013, p. 12).

Therefore, it is just another formation of autocratic elites who care about preserving the power. Citizens, whether female or male, do not get such privileges such as believing they could change something. Nevertheless, back in 2012 Paxton, Hughes and Painter stated that *democracy does not influence levels of women's political representation at the start of political liberalization, but it does affect the growth of women's representation over time by creating conditions under which women can mobilize to improve their status by increasing representation*. (Paxton, Hughes, Painter, 2012 as cited in Tripp, 2013, p. 3). This might be possible in hybrid regimes. But dictatorships are challenging to shake without a major overturn.

The general belief that has been backed up by research such as one made by Inglehart and Norris (2003) points out that attitudes towards women's leadership are more egalitarian in democracies, i.e., democracies influence citizens to be more supportive of gender equality. Furthermore, *modernization, economic development and the emergence of a postindustrial*

society leads to a cultural change, which in turn transforms gender roles. (Tripp, 2013). However, Tripp, by referencing the research by Inglehart, Norris and Welzel (2002, 2003) emphasizes that culture is actually the main ingredient that makes gender equality possible:

[...] Women in the Nordic countries have advanced in terms of political leadership faster than women in France and Belgium, even though all are postindustrial countries. Culture matters more than economic development in determining women's political leadership. Cultural change creates an atmosphere of tolerance, trust and political moderation. It leads to values of gender equality; to tolerance of foreigners, gays, and lesbians; to societies that value self-expression and individual freedom; and to activist political orientations – all values that are crucial to their definition of democracy. (Tripp, 2013, p. 4).

Unlike democracies, whose characteristics have been described in *section 4.*, authoritarian regimes leave no space for civil liberties and political rights. Tripp (2013) pointed out that holding elections is the only democratic institution autocracies are pretending to incorporate. Yet, it has been emphasized already how some autocracies have spread their mimicking style to the female share of parliament seats just to make an illusion of gender equality. It is evident that democratic regime has been given a support by scholars regarding the eventual spread of gender equality. Democracy is supportive of such endeavors and the democratic environment is enabling its citizens to approach this issue with an open mind. Nevertheless, discussing it in the second decade of the 21st century throws a shade on democratic status nowadays. The crisis is evident; hence it is not surprising that gender equality is more than hundred years away from being achieved. Feminist theorists have also contributed to the analysis of democracy from the point of view of gender equality and they have contributed in expanding the vision of how democracy can be updated for the better. The third part of the thesis focusing on feminism will discuss this matter. Yet, it should be noted that in such a vulnerable state, autocracies are taking the advantage of current democratic weakness, and it seems as if autocracies are lowering their levels of efforts needed to continue with their mimicking. Furthermore, the real danger considering gender equality and its partial achievement lays in autocratic ability to stretch its boundaries for its citizens in order to keep them behaving well, meanwhile preserving its power under the veil of pretense in what they seem to put less and less effort to keep it unobvious. This statement will be further supported in the second section of this part.

4.2. “Zombie” Democracies

The Foreign Affairs article by Kenneth Roth, *The Age of Zombie Democracies*, published on July 28, 2021, explains why autocrats have been abandoning the pretense of democratic rituals. He briefly goes from Belarus, Egypt, Russia, Uganda to Venezuela to portray how authoritarian leaders of these countries monopolized media, restricted civil society, and manipulated state institutions while holding periodic elections.

Such methods are never foolproof, however, and their effectiveness has diminished as citizens have wised up and learned to operate withing rigged systems. A growing number of autocrats have thus been forced to rely on ever starker forms of repression: they still hold periodic elections since their people have come to expect them, but they do not even pretend that these empty rituals are free or fair. The result has been the proliferation of what might be called “zombie democracies” - the living dead of electoral political systems, recognizable in form but devoid of any substance. (Roth, 2021).

Traditional dictatorships, on the other hand, make no effort to incorporate pretense of democracy. *The Saudi and Emirati monarchies don’t even bother to hold direct national elections. Nor does the Chinese Communist Party; its kin in Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam; or the unapologetically authoritarian governments of post-Soviet Central Asia.* (Roth, 2021).

This means that the standard democratic response a.k.a. *attacking tools of electoral manipulation: calling out censorship, opposing limits on civil society, or defending the rights of opposition candidates*, is no longer effective. In such environment one might believe that if autocracies nowadays are becoming less prone to mimicking and more prone to embracing their usual rule, then there is no point in pursuing an idea of gender equality pretense. If one considers the newly coined term of zombie democracies and the fact that autocrats nowadays pay less effort to their mimicking styles, then hypothesis *H1: Autocrats exploit gender equality agenda for their own benefit of establishing democratic façade* is false. But only partially. Roth (2021) points out that even the worst zombie democracies rely on some degree of popular consent, coerced as it may be. And, since authoritarians remember that emancipated women are a part of the popular consent, presenting an illusion of taking gender equality seriously can play well for them. *Section 5.* will discuss this in detail. However, it must be noted that an alarming situation is taking place globally, and Roth’s predictable proposal to solve the problem by encouraging the US and like-minded democracies to continue *denouncing censorship and other*

abusive tactics that zombie democracies use to silence their critics (2021) is understandable. However, a point was indeed made – *even the most committed dictators have a hard time hanging on when the public has completely turned on them.* (Roth, 2021). But if President Biden and other (flawed) democracies’ leaders follow Roth’s proposal and *stress how, in their quest to retain power, the leaders of zombie democracies have utterly forsaken their people* (Roth, 2021), there is no certainty that there will be no devastating, Arab Spring - like consequences.

4.3. Istanbul Convention and the 2021 April Sofagate

The establishment of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, also known as Istanbul Convention, was groundbreaking because it was based on the understanding *that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women.* (10 Years of the Istanbul Convention: Combatting Violence Against Women across Europe and Beyond, 2021). During its ten years of existence, the Istanbul Convention has set the standards for preventing violence against women as well as for protecting women from violence. Furthermore, it has enabled to bring authorities and civil society together for creating appropriate policies for further implementation of its aims. Even though the Istanbul Convention focuses mostly on violence in all its forms against women, it also recognizes that men experience some forms of violence also. *As of 2021, 34 member states of the Council of Europe have ratified the Istanbul Convention, 12 have signed it – along with the institution of the European Union – and it is used as a basis for action by many countries outside Europe as well.* (10 Years of the Istanbul Convention: Combatting Violence Against Women across Europe and Beyond, 2021).

However, during this year, Poland and Turkey announced their plan to withdraw from the treaty. *Equality Now* underlines the fact that this pushback represents the Istanbul Convention’s impact on drawing attention to structural inequality.

The last report submitted by Turkey was in 2017. In its introduction, there is an emphasis on the Turkey being one of the strongest supporters of the Convention since the first day of negotiations, and its contribution to the drafting process. Turkey was also one of the first countries signing the Convention (May 11, 2011) on the day the convention was opened for signature and then, became the first to ratify it without any reservations (March 12, 2012). Since July 1, 2021, however, Turkey is officially no longer a state party to this convention due to its

own withdrawal. Turkey has seen the convention as something that encourages divorces, hence undermines traditional family values. Especially problematic for Turkey is that as a signatory it had to protect victims from discrimination regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The main Turkey's worry is that this may lead to gay marriage. (Yalcinalp, 2021).

President Erdogan's spokesperson, Fahrettin Altun, argued that the Istanbul Convention's original intention of promoting women's rights had been "hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalise homosexuality" and that it was incompatible with Turkey's social and family values. (Yalcinalp, 2021).

But the reaction of Turkish citizens was not as supportive of the government's decision. On March 20, 2021, Turkish women came out to the streets to protest and their slogans were: "Istanbul Convention saves lives. We do not accept one man's decision." (Yalcinalp, 2021). No matter how much women's rights activists, lawyers and opposition politicians denounced one man's decision, pointing out that he cannot legally take Turkey out of an international convention ratified by parliament, the time has shown that he can as any other authoritarian out there.

In April 2021, a meeting was held between European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel, and Turkish President Recep Erdogan. Nevertheless, the meeting has been labeled since then as the Sofagate meeting, considering that only two sofas were prepared for the meeting instead of three. *As Michel and Erdogan took their places in the center of the room, a video shows a visibly confused Von der Leyen left standing saying "ehm...?"*. (Hutchinson, 2021).

The EPP Group, Parliament's largest political group, of which Von der Leyen is a member, said that "someone should be ashamed because of the lack of the proper seat for Von der Leyen in Erdoğan's palace," adding, "The EU signaled openness for a dialogue, but we stand firm by our values. Women deserve the same recognition as their male colleagues." S&D leader Iratxe García Pérez said, "First they withdraw from the Istanbul Convention and now they leave the President of the European Commission without a seat in an official visit. Shameful." (Hutchinson, 2021).

The reactions were outrageous, criticizing Erdogan but also Michel for taking a seat without offering it to Von der Leyen. The social media had a topic for discussions, but three months

later it seems to be a forgotten incident. The first female president of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen herself tweeted that the visit to Turkey was a successful one and Turkey, as she said, had shown interest in re-engaging with the EU in a constructive way. Nevertheless, the Von der Leyen's spokesperson did make clear that the commission president's feelings were hurt, and it sharpened her focus on the issue of equal rights during the discussions that followed. (Boffey, 2021). He goes further saying:

The president of the commission was clearly surprised and that is something you can see from the video... The protocol level of our president is exactly the same as that of the president of the European council. Our president is a member of the European council in her own right and normally when she goes to foreign countries, she was treated in exactly the same way as the president of the European council. The president expects that the institution that she represents to be treated with the required protocol and she has therefore asked her team to take all appropriate contacts in order to ensure that such an incident does not occur in the future. The president's assertiveness was clearly on display in that she did not walk away from the meeting, she took part in the meeting, and played her full role. (Boffey, 2021).

Erdogan's diplomatic faux pas was briefly explained by insisting that EU's own protocol requests were applied. The EU Council head of protocol said, however, that the team did not have access during their preparatory inspections to the meeting room. Turkish Foreign Prime Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu reacted only when Italian Premier Mario Draghi used 'strong' words against Erdogan and described the treatment of Von der Leyen in Ankara as "inappropriate". Because of this, Italian ambassador in Turkey was summoned by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, which strongly condemned the unacceptable populist rhetoric of the appointed Italian Prime Minister Draghi, *and his ugly, boundless statements about our elected president*. (Fraser & Petrequin, 2021). As for the ugly, boundless treatment of the female President of the EU Commission, there have been no specific explanations. Such position is actually helping Turkey with taking a non-interested position, blaming the EU representatives for the incident, considering the tensions between two EU presidents. Michel was slow with the apology, but did extend it eventually, unlike Ankara. But at this point, it would be highly naive to expect from more authoritarian than hybrid (4. Democracy Index 2020) Ankara extending their apology out of courtesy to Von der Leyen, who returned to the Sofagate incident twenty days later and addressed it in her explicit statement:

I am the first woman to be President of the European Commission. I am the President of the European Commission. And this is how I expected to be treated when visiting Turkey two weeks ago, like a Commission President, but I was not. I cannot find any justification for the way I was treated in the European Treaties. So, I have to conclude, it happened because I am a woman. Would this have happened if I had worn a suit and a tie? In the pictures of previous meetings, I did not see any shortage of chairs. But then again, I did not see any woman in these pictures, either. [...] I felt hurt and left alone: As a woman and as a European. Because this is not about seating arrangements or protocol. This goes to the core of who we are. This goes to the values our Union stands for. And this shows how far we still have to go before women are treated as equals. Always, and everywhere. (Von der Leyen, 2021).

In other words, what has happened to Von der Leyen is what Istanbul Convention is trying to prevent. The overall reactions, however, were different. Male EU diplomats complained that the controversy between the presidents had made the EU seem dysfunctional, causing serious reputational damage on the world stage. It was interesting to notice that some female EU diplomats pointed out that even though Michel deserved criticism, Von der Leyen should have moved on rather than return to the issue in Parliament. (Herszenhorn et al., 2021). It remains a question would female EU diplomats, supporting such opinion, let go the Sofagate easily if they were in the EU President of Commission's shoes.

It is obvious that this diplomatic fiasco serves as a good representation of where gender equality stands today. Unfortunately. But it also showed that authoritarian regimes will wisely use the opportunities during the weak moments of democracies.

5. The Dangerous Manipulations

The second section of the first part of the thesis showed the statistical results regarding gender issues such as women empowerment and political representation. Data showed that some authoritarian countries such as Belarus showed a rise in female share of seats in parliament. Such occurrence has been noticed and researched by scholars, but the explanation of such notion is more difficult than it seems. The difficulty lays in question – is authoritarian pursuit of promoting women empowerment serves mostly to their own good, i.e., preserving its power, or paradoxically it does push women's position in a patriarchal society to a new level?

5.1. From emancipation to gender equality

The notion of impersonating gender equality has been noticed and researched from the perspective of African countries. Ethiopia's government announced in late 2018 that Prime Minister's cabinet would be 50 percent women, including ministers of defense, trade, and transport. The argumentation of such decision was backed up by Prime Minister's speech, saying it is his way to show respect to the women for all the contribution they have made to the country. (Brown, 2019). It has to be noted that in Ethiopia a prime minister – currently it is Abiy Ahmed - holds the executive power, while a president is just a ceremonial position. A week after Ahmed's announcement regarding gender quotas, a female president was appointed in Ethiopia – Sahle-Work Zewde, and a week after that another woman, Meaza Ashenafi, was appointed as the first female president of the country's Supreme Court. (Brown, 2019).

Brown (2019) in his article *Autocrats push for women in government: Window dressing, or real change?* points out that *autocratic governments around the world often have a habit of absorbing powerful women into their fold so that they don't become challengers, and of promoting gender balance as way to make themselves look modern and enlightened.* This is a trick that works, and history has shown examples of bringing modernization to the country in an autocratic way. Yet, it may remain a delicate subject. Foreign Policy published an article on March 30, 2011, called *Stiff Upper Lip* by Charles Homans portraying world autocrats in a sarcastic way, beginning an article with – *Syrian President Bashar al-Assad may have shaved off his mustache, but it's going to take a whole lot more than that to convince the world that he's not a dictator. FP investigates the whiskers that autocrats wear.* (Homans, 2011). Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the father of the modern Turkey, was listed first in the article, followed by Francisco Franco, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Saddam Hussein, etc. Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States of America H.E. Namik Tan reacted to this article due to the comparisons made between Ataturk and Hitler or Stalin:

Ataturk's achievements and the democratic legacy he left behind make him one of the great visionary leaders of the last century. It is thanks to Ataturk that Turkey now has a unique position in the Muslim world, with a vibrant, secular democracy and burgeoning economy. Particularly at a time when Turkey is being cited as a source of inspiration in the face of the dramatically changed Middle East, it is most unfortunate, outrageous and insulting to characterize Ataturk as an autocrat. (Tan, 2011).

Ten years later, when Turkey is further than ever in 21st century from being a democracy under the rule of President Erdogan, putting Atatürk among dictators such as Hitler and Stalin was, indeed, reckless. Nevertheless, women's emancipation that was brought to Turkey, as well as in the US and Europe in general, represents a beginning of gender equality story, whose actual birth was on December 10, 1948, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which included gender equality. And, as it has been already pointed out, gender equality has been a central part of UN work among UNDP and UN partners since 2000, and subsequently it was established as a fifth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDGs) in 2015. (Goal 5: Gender Equality, 2018).

Kathryn Libal in her research (2008) examined debates over Turkish women's emancipation and women's independent organizations in Turkey during the 1930s, such as the most prominent one - the Turkish Women's Union (Türk Kadın Birliği, TWU). It had a troubled destiny, but it brought impressive progress to the newly formed Republic. *Between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, the TWU actively advocated for women's suffrage and other civil, political, and social rights. The organization gained international acclaim through its affiliation with the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAW).* (Libal, 2008, p. 33). In 1935, when the TWU hosted IAW's 12th Congress, it was in the center of international attention. But the negative feedback was coming from Istanbul, Ankara and other parts of Turkey, where the organization was under harsh critique due to its feministic approaches. Therefore, the TWU was disbanded.

The closure of the TWU illustrates an important contradiction between the Turkish state's public support of women's emancipation as a key aspect of Turkish modernity, and the social and political pressure that entailed the demise of independent women's organizing. On the one hand, Turkish women were valorized as a model of women's emancipation by Turkey's national elites and by women's rights activists from the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. The organization provided evidence to the West that Turkey's national transformation deserved recognition; it signaled the seriousness of Turkish reforms and Turkey's commitment to participation in international institutions and processes. On the other hand, writers for Turkey's lively satirical press criticized Turkish feminists and women's organizations for being divisive and "out of touch" with the realities faced by most Turkish women. (Libal, 2008, p. 33).

Elite reformers that were led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, promoted rapid modernization and secularization of daily life as a means to establish Turkey's legitimacy at home and on the world arena. *As in other parts of the Middle East in the 1930s, the 'women question' dominated public and political discourses.* (Amin 2002; Fleishmann 2003; Russell 2004; Baron 2007 as cited in Libal, 2008, p. 34). Consequently, women were granted the right to vote in local elections and run for local office in 1930, while in 1934 these rights were extended to the national level (Gole 1996, p. 63-78 as cited in Libal, 2008). This was exactly when the TWU was advocating for changes that were way deeper than those that the political elite was integrating. After all, the TWU was founded in 1924 and its aim was achieving social and political rights to women. In other words, the organization and its objectives were ahead of its time, and no matter how rapid modernization process was, some changes were more difficult to achieve. The founder and first president of the TWU, Nezihe Muhiddin, was brought up on charges several times in 1927 and 1928, targeting her for mismanagement of TWU funds. (Libal, 2008). Muhiddin resigned in 1927, and Latife Bekir, the new president, shifted the mission to promoting women's involvement in public life through education and philanthropy, organizing charities to poor women and children, sponsoring educational events on mothering, etc. (Libal, 2008). Nevertheless, there was a significant rumor that circulated around TWU, Atatürk and the upcoming IAW Congress:

Rumors circulated that Atatürk rushed to give women the vote in late 1934 in order to influence world public opinion of Turkey. Having women in parliament when the IAW Congress convened in Istanbul a few months later would contribute to Turkey's image as a "progressive" and "modern" country. An official IAW historical account claims that Corbett Ashby met with the mayor of Istanbul prior to the congress and said to him, "What a pity that women will come from all over the world to modern Turkey, and find Turkish women still without the vote" (as quoted in Schreiber and Mathieson 1955, 44). According to the account, Ashby's idea was passed on to Atatürk, who then moved to grant women suffrage and the right to serve in national office. (Libal, 2008, p. 37).

True or false, the TWU's importance is evident and important, especially because it was a period of pre-WWII environment, when today's democracies were carrying a colonial baggage, and nationalists' boiling and militarization was rising with every single day. Libal's paper depicts that environment, and the following citation may serve as an excellent self-explanatory example of the described political environment:

Ahmet Ağaoğlu called for overcoming internal divisions to secure national futures, citing a heated exchange between an Indian and a British delegate. The Indian charged, “You have been talking about democracy and saying that England is democratic, but in India you oppress us; you don’t give us the chance to be free.” The Brit reportedly responded, “That’s because you aren’t ready!” For Ağaoğlu, British rule in India underscored the danger of being perceived as “weak” and in need of European tutelage. It also offered him an opportunity to highlight Turkey’s relative power within the pantheon of newly emerging states. (Libal, 2008, p. 40).

Finally, another interesting observation that is present throughout the paper is regular Turkish women’s reaction to what Turkish feminists were advocating. For example, Mihri Pektas, as the first woman deputy to Turkish Parliament, addressed the above-mentioned forum on peace with a speech, promoting peace and encouraging IAW leaders to pressure their own governments to reverse expansionist policies. But many Turkish women remained skeptical, and questioned the promotion of pacifism at a time of European colonial rule in Africa, Middle East and Asia. (Libal, 2008). The final word had the president, and Atatürk declared: “We are people who want to distance ourselves from war even for our men, but if we are forced to make war, our women will find themselves again alongside our men in the national struggle.” (Libal, 2008, p. 41).

The reforms introduced under Atatürk had an immense impact on Modern Turkey, and the father of Turks is still living in hearts of his followers. Sener Eruygur, a former Turkish Gendarmerie Forces Commander General, has called Atatürk ‘the cement of the Turkish nation, who provided the Turks with hope in a time of despair’. (Amraoui & Edroos, 2018). But the currently ruling AK Party have gone away from Atatürk’s secular notions, restored headscarf for women, restricted alcohol sales, revived Imam Hatip education system, *pumping billions of dollars to religious schools*. Furthermore, Erdogan has hold speeches emphasizing Turkey’s Ottoman - Islamic history and domestic achievements over Western ideas. Yet, he also compared current Turkey to Christian Democratic parties in Germany, saying that Turkey is a country of Muslim Democrats. (Amraoui & Edroos, 2018). This is a red flag that signals that it is rather difficult to promote gender equality agenda as it is today in the environment of Christian Democratic Parties of Germany, or Muslim Democrats in Turkey. And this is when a democratic rebus begins, and dangerous manipulations rise.

5.2. Saudi Arabia Reforms

Nowhere in the world are women more oppressed in the 21st century than in the Middle East. Since 2018, however, the Gulf states have undergone some reforms, that can be put under the so-called Vision 2030, which is a set of socio-economic reforms first proposed in 2016 by Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. (Schaer, 2021). In his 2017 speech, he vowed to eradicate radical Islamist ideology from the Gulf kingdom, while women were finally allowed to obtain driving license without a permission of male relative in 2018. (Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), 2017). During June 2021, Saudi Arabia has been frequently announcing new social reforms such as slightly amending a law to allow women to live independently, without getting a permission from their father or male kin. Then officials declared that women could register to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, again without a permission of their male guardian. Furthermore, officials from the General Commission for Audiovisual Media (GCAM) reported *that legal amendments meant that vetting procedures for imported books and magazines would be simplified. It means that there will be less censorship, and more access to books.* Another change that can be particularly disputable in the ultraconservative monarchy is the Islamic Affairs Ministry's announcement that mosque speakers might only be turned up to around one-third of their volume during the broadcasting of the call to prayer. (Schaer, 2021).

Such rapid changes were described for Deutsche Welle by Robert Mogielnicki, a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, as the Crown Prince and the policymakers' attempt to find *a balance between long-term objectives and making tangible progress on the ground.* He says that a lot of these changes make an immediate impact, further noting that such changes bring enormous support from young locals, since nearly two-thirds of the Saudi Arabians are under the age of 35. (Schaer, 2021)

Considering that such reforms few years ago were unimaginable in Saudi Arabia, a rapid acceleration of certainly positive changes in the monarchy bring out the questions of what type of pattern do these reforms establish? The political science professor Nathan Brown told Deutsche Welle that this is *a part of a trend of significant liberalization in some social spheres but not in political spheres. Some are significant in daily life and therefore should not be minimized. But they are not structural changes.* (Schaer, 2021).

[...] it is important to remember that many of these changes can still be reversed [...] What the incremental series of reforms is doing though, is further centralizing power

within the Saudi royal family. In fact, there is some suspicion that all the tinkering with power structures, the creation of new commissions and offices and the rapid introduction of changes is just another way for Mohammed bin Salman to accumulate power and ensure civil servants are loyal to him. (Schaer, 2021).

A documentary by Real Stories (2021), called *Secrets of the Saudi State*, brought into the light a current state of women's lives after the legalization of female driving. The documentary, as a matter of fact, showed a still highly oppressed society despite the newly introduced reforms. The documentary creators were always paying attention to the government's supervisors whose duty is to register what and why they were filming what they did. It also brought to light that among obedient population, modest opposers to the regime exist. The crucial ingredient to such opposition is to know how to do it without crossing the line. Malik Nejer is the animator, who presented in the documentary the work of his team – creating satirical cartoons:

We made a show named *Masameer*. It is distributed online. We surpassed 750 000 000 views. [...] We go to places where other people do not dare to go. [...] We tackled a lot of taboos in our society. Animation allows you to go further than you usually do. The King will tolerate the joke because it is not a serious figure. (YouTube [Real Stories], 2021, 13:29–14:51).

It has actually become a Netflix animated television series that has taken Saudi Arabia by storm. *Saad, Saltooh, other ordinary Saudis and Trad, a talking dog, are the stars of 'Masameer County'*. These are the characters depicting people that can be seen in offices, restaurants, as well as in the distinctly Saudi places – *Istiraha: the living-room like area where Saudis socialize*. (Foley, 2021).

What *Masameer County* exemplifies is the freedom of the Saudi artistic imagination, which is shocking, stunning, hilarious, and wild. But the series also provides society a framework for discussing contentious issues that can still be presented as “apolitical.” National leaders are not discussed, and nobody is really blamed for the problems facing society. This choice allows Malik Nejer, the show's producer, to broaden the audience for his animated series, one that is also reflected in its blending of highbrow and lowbrow humor. Indeed, Nejer intends for *Masameer County's* comedy to be “all in the family,” to cite the title of the U.S. sitcom that adopted a similar mindset. (Foley, 2021).

In other words, this animated show proves that the mindset of Saudis, at least younger ones, has not stopped evolving due to the overly traditional country. Saudi women such as Abi Abu Sulayman, a tour guide, and Farrah, a student of English Language and Translation who aims to be a tour guide also, a profession which used to be forbidden for women not that long ago, are a proof that Saudi women strive for change. But, under the boundaries of respecting the Crown. (YouTube [Real Stories], 2021). Furthermore, these women shared the experiences they had due to their dream of doing what they love. Other women did criticize them, but the intimidating critics came from men, their colleagues, who were afraid of the newly made competition. When women started obtaining driver's license, conservative and obviously insecure men started threatening them in-person but also online via twitter, saying that they will *burn the cars of women, hit the women, harass her*, etc. (YouTube [Real Stories], 2021, 11:49-12:02). It is obvious that passing reforms for centralizing one's power is way easier than to make people change their almost hypnotized minds over the years of constant conservatism. Nevertheless, the Crown is not openly criticized not even by the people who seem to despise the introduced reforms. Another interesting moment from the documentary is certainly when Ms. Abi Abu Sulayman confirmed that for Saudi Arabia it is better when the changes come via top-down approach rather than the bottom-up. She says that only this system will force people who are against modernizing changes to obey it. Apart from that, she does point out on behalf of other women and herself that she does not want to wait for centuries until she gets the right to drive or to do the job she loves, as well as get a right to be independent and not to have a male guardian - *As long as we have these small groups disturbing our development, it must come from up, this is the only way to let everybody accept the changes*. (YouTube [Real Stories], 2021, 12:27–13:00).

A man who can serve as an example for these conservative traditionalists is Khaled Sharaa Al Qahtani, a hai'a worker, whose Muslim duty is to promote virtue. The following is his advice to women without *abaya* and his statement regarding treatment of Saudi women in general:

I try to advise such women. Most of the time, they already know it's wrong. Sometimes, out of embarrassment, or because the devil tells her to... she will react angrily to your advice and deny that she's wrong. She will deny that her *abaya* was open. [...] Women aren't suppressed here. They are the soul of our body. Women play an essential part in our lives. Behind every successful man, there's a woman. Our women are wonderful, chaste and patient. They tolerate us, men. The faith says to women: 'Stay within your

home'. And so, we can advise and guide them, but we have to do it the right way. That's how it has been and always will be. (YouTube [Real Stories], 2021, 25:54-26:49).

This man that calls himself a *moderate* Muslim also stated in the ending part of the documentary that all Saudis are Muslims and he wishes that the whole world will be Muslim too: "Is Islam changing? No, it'll never change in Saudi Arabia. Islam is one. All Saudis are Muslim. All of them. But I'd like the whole world to be Muslim". (YouTube [Real Stories], 2021, 36:21-35:35). An interviewer should have asked him what is his definition of radical Islam that the Crown Prince announced to eradicate. Yet, the documentary seemed to be brave enough.

Saudi Arabia, as a monarchy, does not even bother with democratic impersonation. As a matter of fact, they will probably laugh out loud and perceive 'mimicking of democracy' as a notion that is beneath their level. Yet, bringing modernizing reforms that do have less restricted personal freedom to women is serving the Crown a purpose primarily in the field in winning the obedience of the people. As much as it is a change that needs to be positively perceived, it is still a dangerous game in which the elite is always one step ahead. On the other hand, considering that today's Europe and North America have still not achieved the full gender-equality, as the first part of the thesis has shown, especially in the economic and political empowerment spheres, one cannot but wonder if it is an attainable goal. But there is a valuable difference in still unachieved gender equality in the democracies or even flawed democracies in comparison to authoritarian regimes. The difference is in frequent autocratic calculating and manipulative moves to abuse gender equality values for its own purposes. This type of manipulation becomes dangerous when the country wishes to maneuver between democracies and autocracies until it decides what will be more beneficial for the government, i.e., how to embrace its affinities to autocratic style of governing depending on the world order state, simultaneously creating a hybrid regime.

5.3. Gender equality in Soviet Russia vs. Putin Russia

A Russian TV presenter Kseniya Sobchak, a daughter of the former mayor of St. Petersburg Anatoly Sobchak who was Putin's boss and mentor before the Putin's entrance to national politics, is famous for being Putin's goddaughter with a controversial past and a present-day career in opposing Putin's policy. (Parfitt, 2018). Her family ties made her perceived as a fake opposition candidate for presidency in 2018 when she ran against Putin. Furthermore, sceptics also believed that she agreed with the Kremlin to take part in the elections to distract from the

fact that the most famous Putin's opposer Alexei Navalny (currently in jail) was barred from joining the run for the presidency. (Parfitt, 2018).

On August 13, 2021, Sobchak published a video issue on her YouTube Chanel *Careful: Sobchak* (Осторожно: Собчак) on how the Russian government has used women in politics. The forty-minute-long video issue covers the 'women question' from Female 1917 Revolution to the patriarchal agenda return under Stalin; the beginning of the 'Era of Weavers', i.e., discussing how to get from the handloom to the parliament and how famous Valentina Tereshkova, a Yaroslavl weaver, flew into space for the first time in the world (as a female), becoming an exemplary Soviet woman for half a century. The video issue covers other Soviet women in politics, as well as the Gorbachev's wife, the First Lady Raisa Gorbacheva, whose 'extravagant' outfits and progressive statements were not appreciated by the people living in scarcity. Most importantly, the issue does present an evident position of current female politicians, adhering to the Putin's regime. Under attack, among others, was Elena Mizulina, Duma Deputy, who became an initiator of the so-called 'anti-gay law'. In 2016 she claimed that a criminal punishment for the domestic violence is not right, i.e., trying to decriminalize domestic violence. Furthermore, she is against abortions and any form of perceptions that do not go hand in hand with traditional family values. (YouTube [Осторожно: Собчак], 2021, 30:50–33:08).

Yelena Mizulina, who successfully lobbied for Russia's 2012 gay propaganda law and spearheaded efforts to decriminalize domestic violence, made the statement in defense of recent internet restriction laws. On Monday, Russian senators backed tighter internet controls against foreign meddling that critics say could disrupt Russia's internet and be used to stifle dissent. 'What are rights? They're the biggest lack of freedom. I can tell you that the more rights you have, the less free we are,' Mizulina argued, using the Russian word that translates as both 'rights' and 'law.' [...] 'A ban is when the person is free because it says this is impossible, but with everything else — [you can] do what you want,' she was quoted as saying at an internet safety forum by the Moskva news agency on Monday. (Avalov, 2019).

But the Sobchak's main thesis is that Mizulina is the politician that the government needs in order to propagate the archetype of a strict teacher who moralizes the behavior of girls.

Russian women got their suffrage in 1917. But an interesting point was made by the sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky:

The 1917 Revolution in Russia made our country the first one in Europe to grant women's suffrage. This is very curious because to say that there was a very strong women's movement in the beginning of the 20th century cannot correlate to the Western Europe, where the suffrage movement had a concrete foundation – male citizens had a right to vote, while women were deprived of such right, hence on that basis women demanded for the equality with men. Formally, of course there were electoral rights in Russia. However, the parliament that existed under the tsarism in reality certainly was not a parliament. [...] Those were not the elections of deputies as per the basis of direct and equal suffrage of citizens. [...] Therefore, demanding equal suffrage for women did not really sound convincing because men did not have civil rights either. (YouTube [Осторожно: Собчак], 2021, 01:20 – 02:42).

The British Library Article *Women and Russian Revolution* written by Katie McElvanney, AHRC doctoral candidate at Queen Mary University of London examines and compares the work and role of women in Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik journalism during the October Revolution and civil wars, particularly focusing on the relationship between gender, political activism and journalism. (British Library, 2017).

The brief Kagarlitsky's statement in the mentioned video issue undermines women's efforts no matter how interesting it sounds due to the unobvious emphasis on the class differences. McElvanney's article, however, traces the history of female revolutionaries in Russia and their different ways of participating in events.

The life experiences of women in the Russian Empire before the Revolution were extremely diverse. While wealthier women had access to limited education, especially after women's higher education courses were introduced in the late 1870s, peasant women (who constituted the majority of the Empire's female population in the 19th century) were mostly illiterate. Despite class differences, society was staunchly patriarchal and women of all backgrounds were not allowed to vote or hold public office until 1917. Towards the end of the 19th century, peasant women began to migrate to the cities in large numbers to work in factories or domestic service. Although their working hours and conditions were long and difficult, this was the first time that many women

experienced independence from the patriarchal village traditions and structures. World War I brought even greater freedom – and hardship – as thousands of women were mobilised to fill roles left vacant by men at the front and to support the war effort. (McElvanney, 2017).

The scenario with WWI but also with WWII when women were getting vacancies that were left by men, also occurred in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Yet, it is known that women's employment was encouraged as long as the war was on. *Once the war was over federal and civilian policies replaced women workers with men.* And in 1950s post-war Americans lived in the environment where the image of *feminine, stay-at-home moms were cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children while masculine dads left home early and returned late each weekday, tending to their designated roles as lawnmowers and backyard BBQers on the weekend.* (American Experience, 2018). But this was also a matter of class. Poorer women or Black women in the United States never had an option to stay at home and they have always been expected to work, mostly in white homes as domestic servants. (Shane, 2018).

The first woman in the Bolshevik government was Alexandra Kollontai, a People's Commissar for Social Welfare. She tackled the 'women question' extensively even prior the Revolution. She was a Russian revolutionary and a feminist, advocating sexual liberation. The Bolshevik rule brought the Family Code of 1918, which *gave women equal status to men, granted illegitimate children the same legal rights as legitimate ones, secularized marriage, and allowed a couple to take either the husband or wife's name once married.* (McElvanney, 2017, "How did the Bolsheviks change the lives of women after the Russian Revolution?" section).

Subsequently, in 1920 divorce became easily obtainable, while abortion was legalized. Even Kagarlitsky pointed out in the Sobchak's video issue, that the Bolshevik's goal was to liberate women from the 'kitchen slavery', emphasizing that women were supposed to be liberated in their families as well. He pointed out how cities such as Ivanovo had buildings without kitchen so that husbands couldn't put their wives into the kitchen to cook. These buildings possessed a first floor 'food service' that was allowing people to eat together in a so-called public catering environment. In other words, both women and men would go to work, and after the working hours would come home to eat together, and women would not spare time to cook a lunch or dinner for their husbands on top of working. (YouTube [Осторожно: Собчак], 2021, 03:47–04:1).

But such reforms were short-lived, considering that in the 1930 Stalin reversed many of the rights granted to the women by 1918 Family Code. The conservative, patriarchal and traditional family values were imposed on women, yet again. *Abortion was banned, divorce became extremely difficult to obtain, and the law on the rights of illegitimate children was revoked.* Stalin also closed the ‘Zhenotdel’ (the party’s Women’s Bureau) in 1930, on the basis that women’s emancipation had been achieved in the Soviet Union *and the department was therefore no longer needed.* (McElvanney, 2017, "How did the Bolsheviks change the lives of women after the Russian Revolution?" section).

The early Communist vision of women’s equality and liberation – where women would be able to work in any profession and communal institutions would take responsibility for childrearing and housekeeping – was never fully realised. As emphasis shifted back towards the traditional family unit in the 1930s, women were faced with the double burden of combining domestic duties with (often strenuous) full-time work. (McElvanney, 2017, "How did the Bolsheviks change the lives of women after the Russian Revolution?" section).

Therefore, it is evident that the male-female equality has been a subject of government’s decision to declare that equality was established, hence no need for further improvement. Obviously, it was another insecure and self-preserving attitude of the government towards women, wanting to liberate them to the point when women would not become a threat. This is a feminist approach to the issue and it will be further discussed in the third and final part of the thesis.

Yet, the Soviet Russia still had to portray as if a Soviet women had all doors opened and that they could even go to space. Valentina Tereshkova had no pilot training, but she was an accomplished amateur parachutist and therefore she was accepted for the cosmonaut program when she volunteered in 1961. On June 16, 1963, she was launched in the spacecraft Vostok 6, which completed 48 orbits in 71 hours. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2005). From 1966 until 1991, she was an active member in the USSR Supreme Soviet, she also directed the Soviet Women’s Committee in 1968, and from 1974 to 1991 she served as a member of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. In 2008 Tereshkova became the deputy chair of the Yaroslavl’s province parliament under the United Russia party. Furthermore, in 2011 she was elected to the Duma. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2005).

Contrary to Tereshkova was a democratic reformer, a co-chair of Democratic Russia Party, Galina Starovoitova, who was perceived as a radical politician, subsequently killed in 1998. The following is the excerpt of her speech in Duma:

I would ask deputies not to forget that today in the hall are present representatives of republics such as Buryatia, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, North Caucasus. Russia is a secular state, but some of the present speakers called Russia an orthodox state. Making such a gross mistake within the walls of parliament is impermissible. You should prepare yourselves before the meeting. (YouTube [Осторожно: Собчак], 2021, 17:54–18:14).

The Sunday Times article from November 22, 1998 states the following:

Unlike most victims of contract killings Starovoitova, 52, who collected 1m signatures in support of her failed bid for the presidency in 1996 and was planning another attempt in 2000, was no obvious target. Her business was in human rights, not oil or banking. Once described by a Russian newspaper as 'our Thatcher' for her toughness, she had one of the few untarnished reputations in Russian politics. [...] President Boris Yeltsin with whom Starovoitova worked closely in the early days of Russian reform, declared himself "deeply outraged" and said he would take charge of the investigation. He dispatched Sergei Stepashin, the Russian interior minister, to the scene. "The shots that cut short the life of Galina Vasilyevna (Starovoitova) wounded every Russian who cherished democratic values," Yeltsin said. "The contractors and executors of the murder will be found and severely punished." [...] Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet president, said he had no doubt the killing of this "erudite, brave" woman had been political. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1999)

A former Federal Security Service (FSB) was sentenced to prison terms of 20 years by a St. Petersburg court in 2005, due to the involvement in Starovoitova's killing. In 2015, *former lawmaker Mikhail Glushchenko was convicted of taking part in the organization of the murder and was sentenced to 17 years in prison.* He claimed few months earlier that Vladimir Barsukov *an alleged organized-crime boss ordered Starovoitova's killing after she blocked him from establishing ties with a number of corrupt city officials.* (RFE/RL's Russian Service & Time,

2018). Olga Starovoitova, Galina Starovoitova's sister, stated in 2018 – twenty years after the killing – that there could be several layers of people involved:

Russia's security services "have always been chauvinists toward women" and particularly dislike "talkative women," Olga Starovoitova said, referring to women who speak their mind or challenge the authorities. Referring to her sister and Anna Politkovskaya, an investigative journalist who was killed in her Moscow apartment building in 2006, she said that "talkative women" were being "shot down one by one." [...] "An investigator told me that investigation of Galina Starovoitova's murder is the second longest in Russia. The longest one is the investigation into the murder of [Tsar] Nicholas II" and his family, who were killed by the Bolsheviks in 1918. (RFE/RL's Russian Service & Time, 2018).

6. *Summary of the Second Part*

The second part's purpose was to present how the gender equality agenda has been mimicked by autocrats, while women, therefore, manipulated ever since the emancipation. It is difficult to discuss the topic briefly, but by presenting crucial parts via the example of the emancipation of Turkish women, being always on the threshold between West and the East; as well as comparing Soviet Russia to current Putin's Russia; and examining the Crown Prince's reforms spreading throughout the Saudi Arabia, it is seen that in the autocratic atmosphere the regime's preservation is always the primary goal. It becomes a dangerous manipulation when the plan goes out of control. Delivering women suffrage, but having them enslaved by the traditional values and beliefs, which are out of discussion, tend to look appropriate to the governments. This leads to the conclusion that the crucial citation in this part of the thesis is the one related to the Tripp's findings based on the research by Inglehart, Norris and Welzel (2002, 2003), emphasizing that culture is the main ingredient that makes gender equality possible.

[...] Women in the Nordic countries have advanced in terms of political leadership faster than women in France and Belgium, even though all are postindustrial countries. Culture matters more than economic development in determining women's political leadership. Cultural change creates an atmosphere of tolerance, trust and political moderation. It leads to values of gender equality; to tolerance of foreigners, gays, and lesbians; to societies that value self-expression and individual freedom; and to activist

political orientations – all values that are crucial to their definition of democracy. (Tripp, 2013, p. 4).

Yet, the rest of the second part made evident that culture is a sensitive question, when it is under the authoritarian hand, which will judge anyone who is willing to look outside the box. In the example of Turkey, Russia but also unmentioned in this part Poland, Hungary and other flawed democracies, ‘women question’ was rejected whenever it was connected to the gay rights. Turkey has withdrawn from the Istanbul Convention, Russia has legalized a list of forbidden female professions which allegedly can be fatal for female health; Poland banned abortions, etc. Such an environment makes no space of the current democratic ‘all or nothing’ tendency regarding human rights, which include LGBTQI+ (as it should). This may serve as the first sign that a particular government is using the gender equality agenda for its main purposes by picking what suits them best, but it also can be a signal in the case of flawed democracies that maybe there has been a misstep in the plan’s creation. Maybe mainstream democrats believed that gender equality as an umbrella term would bring the same effect as the women suffrage in 1920s. Yet, due to the evident opposition of these rights by the conservative authoritarian states and so-called flawed democracies, a ‘women question’ somehow ended in the unorganized slop. The struggle becomes even more difficult due to the mainstream democratic belief that the abovementioned statement does not resonate with the democratic values and as such cannot be accepted. However, the hypothesis **H2: ‘Women-question’ tends to fade away in contemporary world**, that will be further evaluated in the third part of the thesis should not be seen as the hypothesis aiming at nullifying gender studies role in an anti-LGBTQ way, but as a reflection that points out how the same idea is rather challenging and impossible even to be spread around the world in the same manner. As history has shown.

Hence, apart from the evident conclusion on the second part of the thesis, confirming the first hypothesis – autocracies do use gender equality for the benefits of preserving its regime and in some way establishing democratic façade when it is needed – women, however, are further manipulated and used to manipulate its society with the creation of the achieved equality by putting one or two women on a significant position. It is high time to note, however, that gender quotas in democracies have not been purely successful either, due to the side effects that quotas bring (more about this in section 8.1. and 8.2.), which is a good topic for further, more open-minded, research.

Third part

Understanding Feminism

"Essentially, it's about the fact that men and women are equal, in the sense of participation in society and in life in general. And in that sense, I can say: 'Yes, I'm a feminist.'" (Angela Merkel as cited in Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), 2021).

The second part of the thesis has shown how discussion about gender (in)equality cannot be whole without shedding light on feminism. This matters especially when one is trying to shift focus from authoritarian regime and its impact on gender (in)equality to democracy's impact to the same matter, considering that feminists without hesitation pointed out to the democracy's strengths but also flaws, primarily in democratic institutions that hinder gender equality's achievement. Due to the results of the quantitative research, feminism gives a broader theoretic perception of the issue both in democratic and authoritarian world. Furthermore, feminism must be discussed in terms of achieving gender equality via democratic rule, because even though having a critical approach feminists strive to make the debate alive, thus update the democratic perception of the issue. Making this parallel provides a clear picture, depicting difference between democratic and authoritarian approach to gender equality agenda.

Nevertheless, feminism is ought to be discussed in a new light that has been emerging lately in attempts to clarify what stigmas regarding feminism have been created, hindering feminism acceptance among women especially. Angela Merkel's recent deceleration 'yes, I am a feminist' after years of shying away from giving an answer, provides with a decent argument that feminism is far from being over, and as a matter of fact, it has been gaining new kind of momentum ever since the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2012 TEDx talk-turned book "*We Should All Be Feminists*" has been hailed as a cornerstone text of 21st century feminism. (Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), 2021).

7. *Are you a feminist?*

Margaret Walters in her 2006 book *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* covered the history of feminism in England, yet she also made an important point regarding the state of feminism among women in their 20s, who were asked whether they considered themselves to be feminists.

Walters points out how some of these women *were university-educated, others working, and all, were clearly beneficiaries of earlier battles for women's rights* (Walters, 2006, p.14). Nevertheless, these women stated that they are not feminists.

The very term itself, one woman claimed, sounds stuffy and out of date. Feminism, she felt, has become, on the one hand, a playground for extremists – she termed them ‘fundamentalists’ – who had nothing useful to say to women like herself. On the other hand, she argued, feminism has become ‘institutionalized’, and she compared it to communism: it demands commitment, not simply to ideas, but to a generalized ideology. [...] it is nowadays just another academic subject. You can get a degree in ‘gender studies’ and that, she felt, is the real kiss of death: proof, if any were needed, that feminism is no longer urgently relevant. (Walters, 2006, p.14).

Walters was hopeful, but mildly bitter towards the answers she received, saying that *perhaps these younger women will feel differently in ten years or so, when they find themselves juggling family, housework, and a job; perhaps they will find that they need to re-invent feminism to suit their own experience.* (Walters, 2006, p.14).

Fifteen years later, UN Women publishes a discussion paper *New Feminist Activism, Waves and Generations* pointing out that feminism is not dead, despite of almost never-ending feminism's stigma – an association with lesbians and man-hatred, which abbreviated feminism to the ‘f-word’.

7.1. Protofeminists ¹⁶

A story about feminism always includes the story of ‘waves.’ It is believed, and agreed among feminist scholars and activists, that a first and second waves are identified at a general near-global level. (UN Women, 2021). From the mid 19th to the early 20th century, a timeline describing the first wave of feminism, has often been described with the demand of suffrage, which could be noticed in the second part of the thesis.

¹⁶ Preceding but anticipating or laying the groundwork for feminism. Protofeminist. (n.d.). In *Your Dictionary*. Retrieved August 13, 2021, from <https://www.yourdictionary.com/protofeminism>

The word 'feminism' appeared in English language from French in the 1890s. But it does not mean that prior to the late 19th century women were silent and fully acceptant of the doomed life they had been burdened with due to various religious interpretations. Walters dedicated a whole chapter of her book to the feminism's roots in religion, citing Hildegard of Bingen, a German Benedictine abbess born at the end of the 11th century, who was sometimes *plagued with doubts about her 'unfeminine' activities*:

Like other medieval women, when seeking to imagine the almost unimaginable, and to communicate her understanding of God's love, she turned to womanly, and specifically maternal, experience, and wrote of the 'motherhood' of God. 'God showed me his grace again', she writes, 'as . . . when a mother offers her weeping child milk.' Some religious women imagine, with maternal tenderness, the infant Jesus. (Walters, 2006, p. 16).

Furthermore, in reference to the 15th century, Walters mentioned Englishwoman Julian of Norwich who questioned whether she must not talk about the goodness of God because she is a woman. By the late 16th century when the Reformation enabled more women to receive education, an increasing number of women began to argue their position not only more consistently but also more aggressively. Nevertheless, it was all done within a framework of religion. Furthermore, it resonated with the notion of superiority which is a discussion for itself.

In 1589, in what one historian has called 'the earliest piece of English feminist polemic', Jane Anger took up a challenging position by insisting that Eve was superior to Adam: a second, and hence improved, model. [...] It is women, she reminds us, who make sure that men are fed, clothed, and cleaned: 'without our care they lie in their beds as dogs in litter, and go like lousy mackerel swimming in the heat of summer. (Walters, 2006, p. 18).

In the 17th century, Walters states, women got more freedom due to the various small groups that rejected the established Church.

... Brownists, Independents, Baptists, Millenarians, Familists, Quakers, Seekers, Ranters. Whatever their theological differences, they all believed the necessity for spiritual regeneration in every individual. The experiencing of what Quakers called the 'Inner Light' was more important than external observance – and that light knows no sexual distinction. (Walters, 2006, p. 19).

But this was also the time of the so-called prophets supposedly possessed by God, and for some by devil, while women in England were persecuted for witchcraft.

Lady Eleanor Davis, for example, had been claiming divine inspiration for years; early one morning in 1625, she heard ‘a Voice from Heaven, speaking as through a trumpet these words, there is nineteen years and a half to the Judgement Day’. She went on to publish tracts that were interpreted as predicting, amongst other things, the death of Charles I. (Walters, 2006, p. 22).

However, more relevant to the topic is the fact that the Anabaptist recognized women to be equal to men, allowing them to pray and speak in meetings alongside men. While women from Levellers’ congregations were particularly active on a larger scale.

The sect encouraged women’s activity, believing in the equality of all ‘made in the image of God’. In the 1640s and early 1650s, when many of their husbands were in prison, Leveller women repeatedly turned up en masse at Westminster – staging what sounds very like contemporary ‘demonstrations’ – to demand freedom for their husbands, but also to complain bitterly about their own, consequent hardships. (Walters, 2006, p. 24).

Their attempts, however, were met with rejections: “It was not for women to Petition, they might stay home and wash the dishes”. (Walters, 2006, p. 24).

Among the Quakers, women had the chance to develop their skills as administrators, and in 1650s women’s meetings were organized alongside men meetings. Nevertheless, by the 1680s, they were seen confining themselves to the ‘womanly matters.’ (Walters, 2006).

Due to the evident hardships that ‘religious feminism’ brought; it was a matter of time when the first secular feminists would let their mind be heard. Yet, it was not without hurdles.

The first feminist according to Walters was Mary Astell, who was deeply religious but had little in common with her predecessors. She was radical, as per the perception of her time, only in her opinions regarding women’s lives, which were restricted by convention. Her first book was written and published in 1694, called *A Serious Proposal to Ladies*. The book urged women to

learn to think for themselves, work to develop their own minds and skills, rather than always deferring to masculine judgement. (Walters, 2006, p.36).

Astell's analysis was certainly timely. Some modern historians have argued that the Reformation, and especially the closure of many convents, had actually made it harder for English women to get any kind of education. But women, Astell argued, were just as capable as men; all they lacked was a rigorous training that would 'cultivate and improve them'. She generously supported other women, warmly praising, for example, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's collection of correspondence and travel writing, *Turkish Letters*. (Walters, 2006, p.37).

Astell also questioned the purpose of marriage in her book *Some Reflection Upon Marriage*, admitting *that marriage was necessary to propagate the species, but insisted that a wife is all too often simply 'a Man's Upper Servant'*. (Walters, 2006, p.37).

As she became better known, Astell was often the target of mockery and crude lampoons: she eventually stopped writing, but was able to use her influence in very effective ways. In 1709, she persuaded some of her wealthier Chelsea acquaintances to support the opening of a charity school. Her project was timely: between May 1699 and 1704, fifty-four schools had already been set up in London and Westminster; by 1729, there were 132 in this area, and many women were becoming deeply involved in their planning and management; and, gradually, in teaching. (Walters, 2006, p.38).

Walters goes on presenting protofeminists of 18th century such as Mary Wollstonecraft and her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* from 1792, later mentioning Olymp de Gouges issuing in the revolutionary France a *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizens* in 1791, and finally getting to the 19th century when in 1843, a married woman, Marion Reid, had published in Edinburgh '*A Plea for Women*', which has been described, rightly, as *the most thorough and effective statement by a woman since Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Vindication'*. (Walters, 2006, p. 50).

Reid covered most of the areas that would preoccupy reformers for the rest of the century and her book deserves to be better known. [...] Reid offers a cool and damning analysis of the way her contemporaries – and, she admits, they are mainly other women – talk so confidently about a 'woman's sphere', and equate womanliness with the

renunciation of self. 'Womanly' behaviour, in practice, means 'good humour and attention to her husband, keeping her children neat and clean, and attending to domestic arrangements'. But Reid insists, more forcibly than anyone else in the period, that this apparently noble and virtuous 'self-renunciation' in practice usually involves 'a most criminal self-extinction'. (Walter, 2006, 50-51).

It is significant to point out how the best-known 19th century arguments for women's rights were written by men - William Thompson and John Stuart Mill, who acknowledged the influence and inspiration of their views. Walters states how intriguing it is that neither of these women, even though they were *educated and articulate*, decided to speak for themselves. *Was this a nervousness about breaking with convention and speaking out in their own voices, or simply a tactical recognition that a man's arguments might be taken more seriously?* (Walters, 2006, p. 52).

William Thompson called on women to make their own demands for education, yet he criticized Mary Wollstonecraft for her 'narrow views' and 'timidity and impotence of her conclusions'. (Walters, 2006, p. 54).

John Stuart Mill published a book *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, which argued that the subordination of women was wrong and it hindered human improvement.

Mill was profoundly influenced by Harriet Taylor, whom he had met in 1830. She was already married, with two small sons; the pair maintained an intense friendship for nearly twenty years, and eventually, two years after her husband died in 1851, they were able to marry. Harriet had published a short article on 'The Enfranchisement of Women' in the *Westminster Review* in 1851; and she had written, though, interestingly, not published, papers that criticized the marriage laws and claimed a woman's rights and responsibilities towards her own children. When she and Mill eventually married, he remarked that he felt it his duty to make 'a formal protest against the existing law of marriage' on the grounds that it gave the man 'legal power over the person, property and freedom of action of the other party, independent of her own wishes and will'. (Walters, 2006, p. 54).

The late 19th century was the time when a true women's movement began in England, but also across the world.

7.2. *Feminism and its waves*

As it has been stated, the first wave of feminism, which started to form almost at a near-global level by the mid 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, was associated with a demand for suffrage. (UN Women, 2021). It was associated with a particularly prominent and militant campaign, which did involve violence. The movements began with the Seneca Falls convention in Baltimore, and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (the proceedings of which were presented in the previous section). The first wave feminists demanded equal rights within the family, equal pay, access to higher education and professions, etc. (UN Women, 2021). The crucial moment is in the fact that feminist activism was never exclusively confined to the Northern industrialized world. *It always had an international, universalist vision appealing to ‘all women, everywhere’, and activists sought to develop connections with other movements and supported campaigns.* (UN Women, 2021, p. 13).

Given the dominance of the English language, it is probable—and problematic—that Anglophone varieties of feminism had the potential to exert more influence than others. Yet, early indigenous feminisms from the South more often than not had a clear sense of their own identities and struggles, and they were confident enough to disagree with their Northern counterparts and develop their own agendas. (UN Women, 2006, p. 14).

1970s and 1980s represent a period of a more expansive and a more international movement, which subsequently marked the emergence of a second feminist wave. This was a generation, which was way more open to radical ideas, but also an impatient generation aiming to achieve social and political change. Considering the long path that preceded to this period, there is no surprise that this generation was eager to change the situation from its roots. This is the generation that shed light on the international issues into their politics:

They were inspired by the Civil Rights movement in the United States, the opposition to Apartheid and the Viet Nam War, while some feminists applauded the Maoist slogan ‘Women hold up half the Sky’. Many young people were brought into political activity at this time, and the ferment of 1968 was not confined to Europe but spread to Latin America, the Philippines and other parts of the world. (UN Women, 2006, p. 14).

Many feminist currents had one important principle – embracing the principle of autonomy. They were insisting on women’s right to determine their own agendas, as well as working within political organizations and parties.

A common theme in interviews with feminists active at this time was the failure of the organized male-dominated left to respond in any adequate measure to their demands. This encouraged them to set up women’s causes or to work in women-only settings and activities—whether, as in the United Kingdom, supporting fair wage and reproductive rights campaigns, creating women-only journals and publishing houses, founding women’s art collectives and women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or setting up refuges from violence and women’s health advisory groups. (UN Women, 2021, p. 14).

Apart from the principle of autonomy, the second wave was significant for the search for theoretical understanding of women’s subordination. The inspiration came from Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* (1953), but it spread to the critiques and developments of Marxism, the proposal of various theories of patriarchy, *absorbing ideas from Freud and Lacan*. (UN Women, 2021, p. 14).

Walters (2006) writes how the second-wave movement was characterized mostly by its organization, i.e., women met in small groups to discuss particular issues or work for particular causes. Furthermore, the ‘body issue’ theme emerged during this wave, hence current ‘body positivity’ movement is not a fully new endeavor. It transitioned into the third-wave also, when Susie Orbach’s *Fat is a Feminist Issue* came out in 1981, and Naomi Wolf’s *The Beauty Myth* in 1990 reflecting upon women’s physical self-hatred and fear of ageing. Furthermore, this wave raised a question regarding crucial needs that everyone has a right to access – health care.

[...] even in the affluent West, women have had to fight hard for the right to better health care: for adequate gynecological advice and care in childbirth; for the right to contraception and, if necessary, abortion; and for more attention to those cancers, of the breast and the womb, for example, that particularly affect women. (Walter, 2006, p. 119).

The third wave roughly spanned throughout 1980s and 1990s. The picture of this period is more uneven and partial than that of the second wave. The three significant elements of the third

wave are: a) *the importance of policy-related activism*, b) *the strengthening of feminist movements and rights advocacy in the Global South*, c) *the consolidation of women's studies as a discipline*. (UN Women, 2021, p. 15).

During the second wave, a need to represent women's interests more securely in law and policy was put forward, but it became a focus during the third wave. Furthermore, the third wave of feminism brought a gradual entry of feminists and feminism ideas into the mainstream politics.

This was in part due to young feminists and older second wave activists entering public life. They became journalists, joined national and international NGOs and took up posts in universities, trade unions, government departments and international agencies. (UN Women, 2021, p. 15).

The global feminist interaction was stimulated by the United Nations' four world conferences on women. The UN Decade for Women, inaugurated in Mexico in 1975, started a momentum of successive events – in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995). The final Women's Conference in China in 1995 was attended by more than 30,000 women from all over the world. These were the women from different generations, including new actors who were somehow distinct from the preceding activists. (UN Women, 2021, p. 15).

It is noted in the UN Women discussion paper, which, as it can be seen, focused primarily at presenting feminism's evolution in a more positive yet all-inclusive approach, that due to internationalizing women's movements, a shift of focus to the gender equality depended on the political will and strength of particular governments. Nevertheless, it can be stated that during the third wave a feminism's institutionalization was achieved by former activists entering the policymaking arenas, which had twofold reactions.

Debates over the pros and cons of 'institutionalizing' feminism, 'working with or against the state' divided movements and some disillusion set in. In universities, meanwhile, post-structuralist ideas gained wider acceptance, displacing most remnants of structuralism and opening up generational tensions between those who saw this development as a loss, the Derridean 'cultural turn' read as a departure from politics altogether. Yet, new currents of thought were developing around identity and sexual politics. (UN Women, 2021, p. 16-17).

It was not, however, all optimistic and shiny. The decade that followed, marked the decline in democratic and human rights' enthusiasm, which projected onto feminism as well.

The 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001 was a brutal counter to the optimism signalled by such as Francis Fukuyama (1992) that liberalism had triumphed over other political and ideological systems. Even before then, conservative forces across a wide spectrum of ideology and religious belief had been gaining a foothold in the levels of power, in global human rights forums and in the grass roots through the conservative churches. (UN Women, 2021, p. 17).

Before the so-called fourth wave of feminism emerged (2010-2020), the feminism was and even still is a subject of extensive criticism as a movement. Depicting a history of feminism briefly is impossible. Furthermore, when one decides to explore this field, an incredible number of contra-statements can be found. As if feminists could not agree in between themselves on what they should stand for. The critique that has to be pointed out is one regarding white middle-class women dictating the feminism that often concentrates on gender discrimination simultaneously overlooking the class differences and racial discrimination.

Brazilian women have argued that feminism is 'eurocentric', that it has nothing to say to them about urgent local problems: racial violence and health issues, as well as the difficulties black women may encounter when looking for work. Indeed, some Latin American women actually reject the word 'feminism'. (Walters, 2006, p. 127).

The mentioned UN conferences that were shown as an example of positive progress in the field by the UN Women paper, underwent some important criticizing that were not explicitly mentioned in the paper itself. Walters, however, states that *at a world conference in 1980 some women complained that discussions on veiling, and on female genital surgery, never consulted those women most concerned.* Furthermore, Walters mentions that:

At another conference on population and development held in Cairo in 1994, Third World women complained that the agenda had been hijacked by European and American women who were only interested in contraception and abortion; and that when they did tackle 'Third World' issues, they sounded both patronizing and racist. Even at Beijing in 1995, there were complaints that endless discussion by Westerners of reproductive rights and sexual orientation meant that the urgent concerns of women

from less developed nations were ignored. As one woman remarked, applying Western feminism to the concerns of, say, South America, 'is not unlike trying to cure severe stomach ache with a pill meant for headaches.' (Walters, 2006, p. 132).

Cross-cultural misunderstanding is an issue that should not be underestimated. Walters mentioned Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley's suggestion from their third collection of essays *Who's Afraid of Feminism? Seeing Through the Backlash* which says that feminism makes many people uncomfortable partially because the feminism's main purpose is defining who women are and what they want. This challenges the division of women's lives between public and private life.

Walters finishes her book by noting that if feminism is ought to be something living and evolving, then it will have to re-invent the wheel, i.e., find new issues and a new language for discussing and disseminating the discussed issues. This was in 2006. The UN Women's discussion paper of this year (2021) proposes a new generation of feminism stretching from 2010 to 2020, declaring that nowadays *feminist ideas are not only more widely accepted, with more women identifying as feminists or with feminist goals, but there is more global awareness of the term.* (UN Women, 2021, p. 20).

Global Citizen (2019) published interesting results from surveys, which purpose was to determine in which countries people have no problems to label themselves feminists. The results show that top ten feminist countries are: *1. Sweden, 2. France, 3. Italy, 4. Britain, 5. Australia, 6. The US, 7. Turkey, 8. Denmark, 9. Mexico, 10. Germany.* (Sánchez & Rodriguez, 2019). Nevertheless, the top five countries that disapprove of the #MeToo Movement (tackling sexual harassment at work) are: *Denmark, Sweden, France, Australia and Germany.* (Sánchez & Rodriguez, 2019). Furthermore, top ten countries that consider catcalling acceptable are: *1. Denmark, 2. Germany, 3. Britain, 4. Australia, 5. Sweden, 6. Italy, 7. The US, 8. France, 9. Mexico, 10. Turkey.* (Sánchez & Rodriguez, 2019).

Technological advancement, especially the emergence of social media, allowed feminists, and activists in general, to be in a communication worldwide, which was unimaginable before. This has its advantages, but it also means that the same platform (social media) is used by those who are against further progress in the field of gender equality, or simply believe that what could be achieved is already achieved. Nevertheless, even UN Women concludes that despite remarkable

progress that has been seen so far, gender equality and feminist rhetoric is still not achieved nor accepted:

A quarter of a century on from Beijing, it is not only surprising but also deeply worrying to see the unaddressed problem of high levels of gender-based violence, the lack of adequate sexual and reproductive rights and services in many countries, the continuing wage gap and the very limited progress in acknowledging the need for affordable and gender-equitable care. This is not to deny that progress has been made in many areas, but it has not been sufficient to warrant dismissing feminism as ‘over’. (UN Women, 2021, p. 40).

An article by Christina Ewig and Myra Marx Ferree from 2013, *Feminist Organizing: What’s Old, What’s New? History, Trends, and Issues*, which is a part of Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics, brings forward a conclusion that feminist organizing in the modern world is more global, vital and more transformative.

It builds on what has been accomplished but also stimulates important debates over strategies, allies, and effectiveness. It varies in timing and emphasis by region and appreciates the plurality of local feminist paths. It rests on the commitment of many more individual feminists and organizational resources than feminists of the 1920s or 1970s could have imagined. Feminist organizing continues; its heyday may yet come but certainly has not yet passed. (Ewig & Ferree, 2013, p. 15).

It has to be noted, however, that Ewig and Ferree use a syntagm ‘feminist organizing’ not as ‘women’s movement’ or even ‘feminism’ but they primarily try to use this term as *efforts led by women explicitly challenging women’s subordination to men*. (Ewig & Ferree, 2013, p. 1).

This article is significant because it brings forward the issue related to the dangers of co-optation. The second part focused on gender equality mimicking, yet it is not the only threat. Co-optation of particular feminist rhetoric may lead to seriously dangerous contra-productivity.

Feminist organizing successes and failures sometimes do reflect less on their strategic choices than on how their demands resonate with larger forces that they do not control. Certainly, neoliberalism is a major force restructuring global relations today, as colonialism once was. Some feminists even attribute the gains of neoliberalism in part

to feminist organizing, however unwittingly (Bumiller 2008; Eisenstein 2009). Nancy Fraser (2009) writes that feminism's critique of the family wage opened doors to low-wage employment of women globally, because neoliberal capitalism used this feminist rhetoric to justify access to the poorest paid and most precarious jobs. (Ewig & Ferree, 2013, p. 12).

Another important observation was made by Ewig & Ferree, who remembered Jenson's (2008) statements regarding the EU in 2000s paying attention to bringing men into childcare and women into paid employment as part of a welfare state agenda defined as 'human capital development' rather than 'women's emancipation'. But does replacing 'women' with 'gender' or even 'human', since, thankfully, women are accepted as human beings nowadays (more or less globally), bring a realization that achieving gender equality is on its way, i.e., when it is achieved there will be no point in highlighting the word 'women' or it's another game resembling those of 1920s and 1930s when the women's organizations were dismantled because 'suffrage was achieved'?

The replacement issue gave birth to the mentioned hypothesis H2: **'Women-question' tends to fade away in contemporary world.** Even though the 'women question' was primarily used in connotation to suffrage movements, it is evident that issues related to women go beyond the achievement of women's suffrage, hence the term itself deserves to exit even in the contemporary world. Nevertheless, it has been seen that the tendency is to go for the term 'gender' since it is more inclusive. But does this technique bring positive outcomes or it forces the unclosed women-related issues to be in the shade of whatever is more crucial to be issue number one? The citation present in the beginning of the thesis, presenting the words of Sonja Lokar, a Slovenian sociologist, specialist in political party development, social welfare state issues and gender issues, sharply pointed to the tendency to rename all of the institutions that were focusing on women-related issues to gender-related issues.

I think there is a tendency to immerse the woman first into gender and then gender into antidiscrimination. Actually, it was about trying to reduce the importance of gender equality to the smallest possible level, which is being done systematically. [...] Further, when women's politics became the politics of equal opportunity – this was only cushioning, masking, and was not common only in Slovenia, or even only in Europe, but it is a world trend. In fact, to a great extent, the concept of gender is starting to blur the important questions. [...] These are no longer women's studies – they are gender

studies, and which theme is at present most important? Men's studies. (As cited in Van der Vleuten et al., 2015, p. 48.).

In Slovenia, for example, just around the same period when EU came up with 'human capital development' rather than 'women's emancipation' in the welfare state agenda, the Office for Women's Policy was renamed to the Office for Equal Opportunities. It is highlighted how it was not *just a linguistic matter or a 'play on words' but rather a result and a symptom of events after the independence of Slovenia, the constitution of a new national state and the transition to a new economic and political order.* (Van der Vleuten et al, 2015, p. 47). This Office was abolished in 2012, and replaced with a new *Service for equal opportunities and European coordination* within the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social affairs. (Van der Vleuten et al, 2015, p. 47).

Therefore, 'women' not only fades away but cease to exist in the contemporary narrative, and it might have dangerous consequences if it does not become a matter of discussion. If the gender equality was closer to being achieved, there would be no fears regarding linguistic changes that might shape women's lives, but since there is a long way to go, feminist and scholars in general need to pay more attention to this occurrence.

It is also important to note that the current wave of feminism needs to focus on spreading awareness, among women especially, on the fact that a woman is free to obtain academic degrees, choose what to wear, whether to cook or not, marry or divorce is the direct product of feminism, and that it needs to be supported rather than stigmatized. Furthermore, woman's right to determine her own essence of womanhood can play an important role in spreading a real message regarding feminism and what it can bring to contemporary women – mental, or even cultural, liberation of everything that has been imposed on women for generations, subsequently providing her a freedom to explore and determine who she is and aspires to be. In other words, a contemporary feminism must put forward the fact that a woman can hold her life in her hands if that is what she wants. To put it even more simply, every single woman has a right to decide how to live her life. That is the core of feminism. This way, women would feel more empowered and ready to explore their desires and capabilities. However, in order to succeed, women but also democrats have to be open to talk to their opponents from a non-judgmental way.

Wendy McElroy wrote in her 2003 article *Gender Feminism and Ifeminism: Wherein They Differ* that *feminism needs to have fresh air blowing through its moribund corridors; it needs new ideas and vigorous debate.* (McElroy, 2003, p.10). By a vigorous debate, McElroy primarily meant that feminism needs to respect the voices of women, but especially the voices of women who disagree. *That is where women's liberation has always resided: in the words, "I disagree."* (McElroy, 2003, p.10).

8. *Feminists on Democracy's Struggle to Achieve Gender Equality*

Considering that gender equality is one of the main democratic pillars but it is not yet achieved fully even in most democratic countries, feminists have started to question democracy.

Most importantly, feminist have started to question democracy due to the failure to establish political equality between men and women. It could be seen that feminism has its flaws; therefore, it is natural for democracy to be imperfect. However, Joni Lovenduski in *Feminist Reflection on Representative Democracy* (2019) points towards some democratic biases that need to be considered.

Lovenduski (2019) points out how democracy promises equality, yet its political arrangements are rooted in inequality. She referred to Carol Pateman, who explained *how the social contract on which Anglo-American democracies are thought to be based is underpinned by a sexual contract that established men's political control over women.* (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 20). This sexual contract stimulates patriarchy, and feminism's main issue is based around patriarchy. In other words, feminism's main theory is that equality will never be achieved if patriarchy exists. Therefore, for feminism democracy is patriarchal as history has shown. (Lovenduski, 2019).

Even though Lovenduski's paper strongly criticizes democracy, she does highlight the important fact – the idea of democracy does enhance equality for women, but its institutions may not. *Nevertheless, feminists have benefitted from strong democracy.* (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 32). Therefore, it needs to be pointed out that her attitude is not anti-democratic, but she is rather wishing to highlight why democratic institutions need certain changes in order to achieve the idea of equal political male-female representation in reality.

While claiming inclusion, rights and policy preferences, feminists draw on their rights as citizens to make fundamental criticisms of democratic theory and practice and

demand major reforms to its institutions. Many feminists adopt democratic rhetoric to claim that their movements enhance democratic politics by virtue of the fact that they seek inclusion of more than half the population. (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 32).

The persuasion of the active participation of women in decision-making process has been achieved so far through candidate quotas, women's policy agencies, and gender mainstreaming. (Squires, 2013).

Candidate gender quotas have been adopted in more than one hundred countries, leading to the suggestion that quota fever has affected the world (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2004, 32). Gender mainstreaming was adopted by the United Nations at the 1995 conference on women in Beijing and then taken up by the European Union, its member-states, and international development agencies and is now "an international phenomenon" (True 2003; Walby 2005). These soft-law tools complemented the widespread creation of women's policy agencies, which had been recommended by the earlier United Nation World Conference on Women in Mexico City 1975. (Squires, 2013, p. 790).

Squires' 2013 article *Equality and Universalism* majorly focused on the debate that occurred around feminism vs. multiculturalism, which will not be thoroughly discussed for the purposes of not extending the thesis' scope. Nevertheless, the issue brings forward an important matter which may serve for further research and elaboration of the topic – *there are a large number of equality philosophies that dispute both how we ought to measure equality (whether it is equality of opportunity or outcome that ought to be of concern) and what it is we ought to be measuring (resources, status, capabilities)*. (Squires, 2013, p. 799). The promotion and adoption of the strategies entailed for achieving gender equality, according to Squires, works to address pre-existing inequalities and promotes particular understandings of what gender equality involves and how it should be measured.

Lovenduski accepts the fact that there have been major improvements in the field of achieving gender-equality in comparison to the previous attempts throughout history. Yet, she frankly points out that it is currently rather slow process. She further sheds light on the treatment of women as individuals - making sure not to exclude the alarming issues regarding sexual harassment and subsequent emerging campaigns - and also provides another point of view

regarding the presence of institutional resistance towards the established techniques of persuading women's participation at the decision-making levels.

Resistance was a continuing feature of the implementation process, ranging from refusal to implement the policies to more subtle means of undermining the intentions of the quotas. For example, opponents ridiculed the policies and the women who came forward. A common strategy of opponents was to shortlist women who were inexperienced and would not be nominated, even when experienced and qualified women were available. (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 27).

Her final conclusions resonate with the matters already discussed in the thesis such as autocratic abuse of gender equality – *in more autocratic systems, inclusion may be more likely to be only symbolic*. (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 32). But she also points out something that may explain the reason behind the evident unachieved gender equality in democracies, which was supported by the results of various indices presented in the first part of the thesis:

The political institutions that are labelled democratic were designed to accommodate divisions of territory, religion, class and ideology, all of which cross-cut gender. These differences have not gone away, but the assumptions about gender relations on which they are based are no longer accurate. Similarly, electoral systems are not designed to represent women as a group and representatives are not accountable to women. A further complicating problem is that while women's status as a group with some common interests arises from their bodies, they are (as are men) diverse and have conflicting interests as well. [...] Although equality is a potentially unifying concept, the struggles to achieve it generate fragmentation and competition among different groups in what rapidly turns into a zero-sum game. (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 33).

Furthermore, she points out the issue that was slightly pointed out in the second part of the thesis:

The continuing inequality of women has little purchase in the overall assessment made by watchdogs such as the Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House and Human Rights Watch—all organisations that are currently reporting serious threats to democracy. It seems that the relative absence of women is not thought to be much of a problem. (Lovenduski, 2019, p. 33).

And this observation brings the second hypothesis H2 to a new dimension.

Nevertheless, in order to finalize and round off the thesis' point, it is needed to cast a brighter light on the issue with gender quotas.

8.1. The Issue with Gender Quotas: Corporate World

In 2016, Germany set gender quotas for corporate boards in the private sector, and it resulted in significant increase in the proportion of female board members. California passed a bill requiring publicly listed companies, headquartered in LA, to have at least one female board member by the end of 2019. (Dorrough et al., 2019).

The gender quotas approach has been analyzed by scholars from the perception of how successful it is when it comes to the empowerment of women to strive for leadership positions. Dorrough et al. (2019) presented the results of 'artificial scenario' experiment. Business students were asked to indicate their perceived fit for the advertised leadership positions. The trick was in presenting two different ads to two different groups of students:

One group of students received a job advertisement stating that a company was looking to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions and that in order to reach this goal, female applicants would be preferred until a quota of 40% was reached. Another group of students read a job advertisement without this information. (Dorrough et al, 2019, "Are women more interested in leadership positions?" section).

The results show that the information about quota alone did not increase female students' perceived fit for the position. However, when it was stated that women would be given preference if their qualification is equal to those of male candidates, women were more inclined to apply and perceived a greater fit for the position. (Dorrough et al, 2019).

This, along with other studies, show that gender quotas might encourage women in their career choices. Nevertheless, certain circumstances are needed for this to work.

Another experiment was done in regards to determine how the 'quota women' are treated. Participants of the experiment received the relevant job description and an overview of the job

requirements. Furthermore, the participants were informed about the candidate's qualifications and work experience.

One group of participants was informed that the company had implemented a gender quota, while another group was told that candidates were selected based on merit. Although the female candidate had the same qualifications in both conditions, participants thought of her as less competent and effective on the job if the company's rules for promotion featured a quota. What's more, her chances to further climb up the career ladder was perceived to be smaller as well. (Dorrrough et al, 2019, "How are 'quota women' treated?") section).

According to Dorrrough et al, this is a negative side of gender quotas – the 'stigma of incompetence' attached to it. It is backed by another study in which researchers examined the evaluation of women leaders' performance after being elected. Participants in this study worked on a task in groups, and one group was told that their female member would be a leader due to her performance on an aptitude test, while the second group's leader was assigned based on the gender quota without any further assignment involved. Both groups had a management task to do. The results showed that female leaders who were selected via quota were evaluated as less competent and overall were less recommended for future tasks no matter their actual performance. (Dorrrough et al, 2019).

Dorrrough et al. presented another study of Lebrandt, Wang & Foo *Gender quotas, competitions, and peer review: Experimental evidence on the backlash against women*, which showed that when researchers asked participants to report each other's performance in a team task, *the women that were selected on the basis of the quota were evaluated less favorably by others in both selection contexts and in their subsequent performance*. (Dorrrough et al, 2019, "How are 'quota-women' treated" section).

In the following study, it was proved that gender quotas can also negatively influence the cooperation in the team.

At the beginning of the experiment, female participants were discriminated against by receiving a smaller payment than male participants for a simple computer task. By doing this, we were able to justify the subsequent introduction of a quota rule and reflect real-world conditions for the introduction of gender quotas more closely. We then looked at

both cooperativeness in a group task and how fair the gender quota was perceived, as compared to merit-based selection. For the first part of the experiment, men were assigned to either a high-earning group or a low-earning group. Women, however, had no chance of being among the high earners, which means they were always getting paid less for the same task. During the second part of the experiment, low earners received the opportunity to be promoted to the high-earning group, either based on their performance so far, or based on a gender quota. The results showed that the gender-based promotion reduced cooperativeness in the newly assigned teams and was also perceived to be less fair than the merit-based promotion. (Dorrrough et al, 2019, “How are ‘quota-women’ treated” section).

Therefore, Dorrrough et al. conclude that gender quota is an effective tool in regards to overcome women’s underrepresentation in specific positions, however, it also comes with some rather serious side effects that harm not only the elected ‘quota women’ but also the entire team’s performance. The proposed solution to this issue is to include the set of requirements *such as equal qualifications before applying the quota*. (Dorrrough et al, 2019, “Gender quotas: Effective tool or potential harm?” section).

8.2. The Issue with Gender Quotas: Political Representation

Katrine Beauregard (2017) claims that *the positive effect of gender quotas occurs only for certain types of political activities favored by women such as individual noninstitutional activities*, yet gender quotas might not be enough to overcome the *lower levels of socioeconomic resources which are required for certain activities such as political discussion or involvement in a political party*. (Beauregard, 2017, p. 658).

The Beauregard’s research represents the first study that combines cross-sectional and longitudinal data to assess the influence of gender quotas on political participation. The findings indicated that the adoption of gender quotas is linked to smaller gender gaps for some political activities within countries. Nevertheless, the comparison of countries that have and do not have gender quota shows no occurrence of smaller gender gaps. This indicated that countries with larger gender gaps tend to adopt the quota system in order to improve their lack of women’s involvement in politics. However, this also highlights the fact that the context in which the gender quotas are introduced matter. Furthermore, it is noted that *there is a certain geographic pattern to the adoption of gender quotas, while the political context surrounding the adoption*

contains shared elements across countries and regions. (Krook 2009 as cited in Beauregard, 2017, p. 669).

Gender quotas, according to this study, reproduce most positive effect when it is related to activities that require less skills and time such as signing a petition, boycotting products, and participating in demonstrations. Gender quotas are not enough, however, for women to overcome their lower levels of resources. (Beauregard, 2017).

Sweden together with other Nordic countries are known for its success in achieving gender equality, in the sphere of political representation included. As of 2018, almost all of the political parties in Sweden (left and right) embraced the ideal of ‘gender balance’ in the elected decision-making bodies and in the parliament. (Lépinard & Rubio-Marín, 2018). Nevertheless, no legislative quotas have been embraced. As a matter of fact, legislative quotas were discussed in 1980s, and only in relation to the proposals made in a State Commission of Inquiry. Furthermore, political parties greeted the quotas with skepticism. Instead, the political parties adopted special measures ranging from targets and recommendations to voluntary party quotas. (Lépinard & Rubio-Marín, 2018).

Birgitta Dahl, a former speaker of the Swedish Parliament, stated the following in regards to the achieving women’s involvement in politics:

“First we laid the groundwork to facilitate women’s entry into politics,” she said in a 1998 report on women in politics by International IDEA, a Swedish foundation. “We prepared the women to ensure they were competent, and we prepared the system, which made it a little less shameful for the men to step aside.” (Bohlen, 2019).

Overtime, Sweden did include voluntary quotas for women candidates. Yet it has never been an only way to achieve gender balance, nor has it been the primary way. Sweden’s distinct approach to achieving gender equality is based on the idea that *gender balance in decision-making is the goal, however, that is up to the individual party or company to decide how to achieve and maintain this objective.* Furthermore, the success of Swedish model for gender equality is based on *ideals of consensus-oriented, cooperative, and non-conflictual model of deliberation.* (Lépinard & Rubio-Marín, 2018, p. 396).

To put it more simply, achieving gender equality, as per the Swedish model, is supposed to be a meaningful goal taken seriously and with determination to achieve it and not fall into the autocratic-like ways of symbolically including women ‘here and there’.

9. Summary of the third part

The third part of the thesis focused on theory of feminism in order to present what feminism stands for despite its never-ending stigmas. Furthermore, the third part went beyond understanding feminism’s complicated history - the existence of women’s fight against patriarchy in context of religious boundaries and the emergence of profeminists, followed by the discussion of feminism’s waves and the existence of feminism in the contemporary world – to reflecting upon the democratic flaws from the perspective of feminist scholars, and subsequently presenting the evident issues with gender quotas that are not as successful as it might look.

The importance of this part is in putting forward a less stigmatized perception of feminism, because the current gender equality discussions would not be possible without early feminists and their major contribution to allowing women to come out of the box. Nevertheless, feminism also provided with meaningful reflections on democratic flaws in order to highlight the importance of improving the democratic institutions and its techniques to achieve the set goals. Furthermore, the second hypothesis H2: **Women question’ tends to fade away in contemporary world** was brought into the discussion to emphasize the need for a further research of the position of women issues under the gender umbrella. Finally, this part provided with proposals regarding what should current feminism’s wave focus upon, which is spreading the right message of what it really stands for in order to purge it from never ending stigmas. Only then will the statements of oxymoron nature such as ‘I am not a feminist, but I do believe that us women can do it all’ be less frequent, and declarations similar to Angela Merkle’s could be a usual answer to the intriguing ‘Are you a feminist?’ question.

Conclusion

In the course of the thesis’ writing, the world has been more or less shocked by the fall of Kabul and the Taliban return to Afghanistan, which means that girls and women are the first ones who will suffer from it, while the Taliban officials declare that everything will be different this time around: “We assure that there will be no violence against women. No prejudice against women will be allowed, but the Islamic values are our framework.” Furthermore, in the chaotic environment of uncertainty, Afghan women *were starting to wear the head-to-toe burqa in the*

street, partly in fear and partly in anticipation of restrictions ordered by the Taliban. (Fassihi & Bilefsky, 2021).

Meanwhile, the thesis outcome, as per the qualitative and quantitative research, has shown that the global gender equality will be achieved approximately in 135.6 years. (World Economic Forum, 2021). Considering the consequences of the Taliban's rise, it might take even longer. Nevertheless, the first hypothesis regarding autocratic abuse of gender equality was proved and further extended, by focusing on the danger it carries whenever autocracies failed to mimic their willingness to adhere to it entirely. The Istanbul Convention and Ankara's withdrawal together with the Sofagate were the most recent proof of such behavior. Furthermore, it emphasized the fact that women are the ones who are manipulated the most in such regimes, including the ones who willingly participate in the game on behalf of their authoritarian leaders. Finally, the main verdict was concerning the female representation in parliament being a wrong perception of achieved equality in authoritarian regimes. The mimicking style as well as co-optation brings forward an autocratic tendency to keep its nation enslaved in a specific, in some cases religious, ideology which will challenge women to evaluate the situation independently and feel free to make their own choices.

During the research it has been also noticed that from today's perception of a current global environment, especially from the point of view of countries where the existence of 'non-traditional' sexual orientation or gender perception is strongly condemned and forbidden, promoting gender equality under one umbrella of different gender-related issues is doomed to fail. In such political environment, women will always have to pretend to be equal to men, while an accepted mentality of asking when one is ought to find a proper husband will remain a dominant over woman's success in the sphere of her life where she wants to succeed. Even the EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is being mentioned from time to time purely because she is also a mother of seven children. When gender equality is finally achieved, will women have to point out that there are also mothers besides being a prominent leader? This is an open question that might motivate for further research. Nevertheless, a further research has to be focused on democratic institutions also and the real reason behind occurring tendency to replace 'women' with 'gender'. This is related to the second hypothesis, which is yet to be proved, given that it has provided, within the framework of the thesis, with legitimate arguments for further debate on the topic.

Finally, the thesis showed the reasons why feminism is far from being over and what issues feminism has to tackle in order to release itself from widely present stigmas. Unfortunately, there have been no space for discussing intersectionality, nor feminism's battle with multiculturalism due to its initial patriarchal roots, nevertheless an important matter was covered regarding democratic flaws and gender quota issues – being effective only in actions related to activities that require less skills and time such as signing a petition, boycotting products, and participating in demonstrations. While in other cases, it produces stigma of incompetence and deterioration of team work. As such, the research question 'How have both authoritarianism and democracy affected the concept of gender (in)equality?', has been answered in a more critical light by portraying the authoritarian ways of mis-using the concept for the pure purpose of maintaining its regime, as always, and keeping its nation under control, to the mentioned democratic strategies to achieve gender equality that, nevertheless, is far away from being achieved.

The concluding first section of the third part stated that women's liberation has always resided on the words 'I disagree' (McElroy, 2003), and that this is something that needs to inspire contemporary feminists and women who are pro-feminist values yet decline to label themselves as feminist in order to find a way how to influence the current situation with gender equality, especially regarding the unclosed gap of women's political participation. However, this approach can also be useful in democratic debates in order to come up with new refreshing ways of achieving the goal. The thesis did not explicitly focus on the political sciences' doubtful discussions such as the one proposed by Kendall-Taylor et al (2019) regarding the regional intergovernmental organization's ability to influence qualitative democratization. But, considering the Democracy Index results for 2020, which showed that only 8.4% of world population is living under the regime of full democracy, stating that spread of democratization will solve the problem of gender-equality would be too optimistic, and even idealistic.

Therefore, it is evident that the world is going through a significant and rather challenging transition in which autocracies wisely use the democratization's crisis and it significantly affects gender equality's position worldwide. The first step to getting back in the game for democracy is to reassess and search for the flaws in its decisions, institutions and agenda, considering that scholars have been pointing out where exactly the focus has to be set (as it has been seen in this thesis also). On the other hand, democracy in its theory is nothing without people, hence people who wish to live in a democratic environment would benefit from evaluating their perception and being open to different perceptions. In other words, passively

absorbing the ideas that are being spread is not a successful raise of awareness. It is in authoritarian regime. In a democracy, however, people are the ones who need to critically assess the message that is spread. Yet, it is the matter of further research how much people indeed want to be a part of it. The same applies to the gender equality issue. Are women aware of whether they sincerely want to be a part of politics, or to be in any kind of leadership position or being able to vote and drive is enough, and yet nowadays it is something that many decide to neglect? In any case, there is supposed to be an atmosphere in which any answer to abovementioned question would be acceptable and not sent to the public shaming agenda via social media, but rather for further evaluation of where humanity's evolution has come.

Finally, C.B. MacPherson's statement makes one to wonder now more than ever:

Everybody who was anybody knew that democracy, in its original sense of rule by the people or government in accordance with the will of the bulk of the people would be a bad thing — fatal to individual freedom, and to all graces of civilised living (p.2).
(Kendall-Taylor et al., 2019, p. 16).

Considering that as of September 1, 2021 a near-total ban on abortions took effect in Texas (USA), after the Supreme Court failed to act on a request to block it, what is highly important for the current situation is not to lose what has been achieved, nor further jeopardize the achieved victories by imposed restricting measures.

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