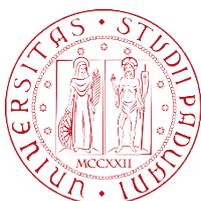


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A Feminist Security Studies Perspective. The Impact of 9/11 on
Women's Participation in U.S. Politics

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Abstract

At present a number of researchers believe that international relations are predominantly "masculine" in nature, where women's "voices" in politics have either been forgotten or remained unheard. After the 9/11 terrorist attack, "hard power" methods of conflict resolution began to dominate in international relations. Military interventions in the Middle East and North Africa increased in order to combat the threat of international terrorism. However, these methods have not only failed to resolve international security issues, but have only accelerated the spread of extremism. The feminists of the Third wave, who criticized American policy in Afghanistan and Iraq, remained unheard of in the fight against global security challenges. After the 9/11 terrorist attack, there was a decrease in the participation of women in U.S. politics due to the dominance of the militarized tools of resolution of international disputes. In modern international relations, the political representation of women, as before, remains at a low level, despite the ongoing UN programs in the field of gender balance and non-discrimination. The debate on gender equality in all spheres of life is of particular importance today, as there are still isolated outbreaks of sexism and gross violations of women's rights especially in the light of the outbreaks of international military conflicts.

Key Words: Terrorism, U.S. Politics, Feminism, 9/11

Introduction

The contemporary international order is marked by the escalating conflicts and entrenched global insecurity. Scholars of international relations and security studies have traditionally analyzed such dynamics through paradigms such as realism, neorealism, and neoliberalism. These frameworks prioritize the role of the states, conceptualizing security primarily in terms of military strength and the state's capacity to defend itself in the event of armed conflict.

Feminist scholarship, which gained prominence in the late 1980s, challenged this narrow focus by advancing a broader understanding of security that incorporates concepts such as justice and emancipation (Tickner, 2014). Rather than privileging the state as the primary unit of analysis, feminist approaches emphasize the individual level of analysis that goes beyond the dichotomous understanding of the differences between "order" and "anarchy". This perspective shifts attention to the construction of identities and the ways in which security discourses produce hierarchies which appear on the both political and societal levels.

Central to this framework is the use of gender as a category of analysis, which enables feminist scholars to analyze the underlying causes of conflict and security threats through a more expansive lens. From this standpoint, state behavior aimed at establishing international stability is often articulated in gendered terms, giving rise to a masculinized strategic discourse. Presence of masculinity discourse in politics influenced the understanding of security issues, as well as the skeptical perception and distrust frequently directed toward women in positions of power, particularly in the matters of national security.

Feminist scholars have examined how states legitimize their behavior in the international arena through appeals to "hegemonic" and "militarized masculinity, a discourse that draw on traditional gender roles linking masculinity with strength, aggression and capacity to prove oneself through military service or combatant (Tickner, 2014; Sjoberg, 2013; Goldstein, 2001). After the end of the Cold War, this model was partially supplanted by a form of corporate masculinity embodied by representatives of the business sector and global corporations. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, however, marked a decisive shift back toward "militarized masculinity" (S. Peterson, 2014; L. Sjoberg, 2007). In response to the growth of insecurity, the U.S. President, George W. Bush assumed the role of national "defender", thereby reinforcing hierarchical gender stereotypes in which female politicians were cast into subordinate roles. Within this framework, two gendered archetypes emerged as viable paths for women in politics: the figure of the traditional mother caring for the nation, like the U.S. First Lady Laura Bush, and the figure of female politicians, such as National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, who actively reinforced militarized discourse by endorsing the use of force, including preemptive attacks strategy in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Feminist researchers further note that in the post-9/11

context, the visibility of women, whether politicians, journalists, firefighters, or political experts, declined markedly in the media.

The focus on the events of September 11, 2001 remains particularly relevant in today's era of escalating military conflicts. Therefore, the revival of militarized masculinity did not fade with the decline of the “War on Terror”, rather, it has become deeply embedded in the foundations of American political discourse. For instance, the current U.S. President Donald Trump frequently cast himself as the “defender of the nation”, claiming the ability to protect citizens from immigrants, terrorists, and progressive social movements. Within this framework, security is aligned with “tough leadership”, a narrative that legitimizes power while simultaneously reinforcing gendered hierarchies. Such discourses contribute to the stigmatization of female politicians, diminishing both public trust in their leadership and their motivation to enter the political field. Importantly, this trend is not confined to the United States. In societies experiencing de facto martial law, women, both in the aggressor and victim states, are subjected to structural gender-based violence and face significant barriers to political visibility. In this global context of gender imbalance, greater inclusion of women in political and military institutions, alongside media representation, could foster processes of "demilitarization" and “desecuritization”. Thus, in turn, would provide alternatives to the existing leadership archetypes of women as either the idealized mother or the militarized female leader.

The central research question of this dissertation is formulated as follows: *From the perspective of feminist theory, how did the events of September 11 influence women’s participation in U.S. politics?* To address this question, the dissertation is divided into three chapters.

As the methodological basis for this dissertation, qualitative research analysis was chosen, relying on the study of both primary (George W. Bush, Laura Bush, Donald Trump, Kamala Harris, Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice official speeches, diaries, as well as the National Security Strategy 2002) and secondary sources (media outlets, academic articles, and textbooks). This approach made it possible to trace the development of feminist security studies developed by A. Tickner (2002; 2012; 2014), L. Sjørberg (2007; 2013; 2019), S. Enloe (2000), S. Peterson (2014), L. J. Shepherd (2019), critically examine media and political discourses in the aftermath of September 11, and analyze the ways in which gendered narratives shaped the visibility and participation of women in U.S. politics. By combining theoretical literature with discourse analysis of political speeches, media outlets, and feminist critique, the dissertation situates women’s political participation within broader structures of militarized masculinity and security-centered state practices.

The *first chapter* examines the historical foundations of gender inequality and their impact on women’s political participation. It aims to analyze how the persistence of stigma and gender stereotypes, often mobilized by traditionalist arguments against equal political representation, has

historically shaped gender inequality and created obstacles to women's suffrage and broader political participation. In the framework of this dissertation in order to conceptualize the influence of the 9/11 terrorist attack on women's participation in politics, the historical background allows to demonstrate that the post-September 11 resurgence of militarized masculinity was not an entirely new phenomenon but rather a rearticulation of existing patriarchal norms within a securitized context. Therefore, the historical overview provides the essential framework for understanding why women's political representation remained constrained in the aftermath of 9/11 and why their participation continues to be shaped by deeply rooted gender hierarchies. The chapter situates this analysis within both a broader Western history of women's rights and the American struggle for political inclusion. By engaging with anthropological and historical research, it highlights how women in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages actively contributed to economic and social development, thereby changing narratives of women's inherent political incapacity. This genealogy of discourse demonstrates how biological, psychological, and religious stigmas have been constructed and institutionalized over time, shaping women's exclusion from political power. The U.S. case is addressed in detail, tracing how patriarchal tradition from the era of Founding Fathers continue to influence political culture and constrain women's suffrage rights.

The *second chapter* is aimed at analyzing the feminist scholarship to develop a coherent theoretical framework for understanding security, women's political participation, and engagement in militarized conflicts. This framework is then applied to the events of the 9/11 terrorist attack and the subsequent "War on Terror" followed by military operations in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Particular attention is given to the Bush Administration's invocation of women's rights as a justification for military intervention, which feminist scholars have criticized as instrumental (Tickner, 2012). The chapter also considers alternative explanations for U.S. involvement in these conflicts and examines how the "defender-victim" dichotomy reinforced George W. Bush's public image while consolidating militarized masculinity. Within this militarized context, the chapter investigates the roles of female soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq and analyzes how militarized masculinity articulated the dual archetype of military women: either as martyrs or as participants in violent masculine practices.

The *third chapter* explores the impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on women's participation in American politics and the evolution of their political behavior. Its main goal is to assess how the shift in political discourse toward militarized structures contributed to a revival of patriarchal norms in American society, thereby reinforcing barriers to gender equality. The analysis focuses on the trajectories of prominent female political figures in the post-9/11 era. Condoleezza Rice, as National Security Adviser, is considered in terms of her incorporation into the masculinist political framework of the Bush Administration. Laura Bush is examined as an archetype of the "faithful wife" of a militant leader, whose political discourse aligned closely with

that of her husband. Hillary Clinton's career trajectory is analyzed with particular attention to how her political image was shaped by militarized masculinity, forcing her to navigate a delicate balance between femininity and toughness in order to mitigate gender bias among voters. The chapter concludes by situating these case studies within contemporary political dynamics, showing how the masculinist hegemony consolidated after 9/11 continues to shape women's political participation and influence in the present.

A possible *limitation* of this dissertation is that it does not employ an intersectional feminist approach, which would allow for a more nuanced analysis of how race, class, ethnicity, and other factors intersect with gender in shaping women's political participation in the post-9/11 realm. While the focus here remains on gender as the primary analytical category, acknowledging this limitation highlights the potential for future research to expand the analysis by incorporating intersectional perspectives.

Chapter 1. Women participation in politics before 9/11 terrorist attack

A broad historical overview of women's participation in politics, extending from antiquity to the present, was included in order to situate a deeper understanding of the logic of gendered power structures. This long historical scope makes it possible to demonstrate how existing stigmas, whether framed as biological, psychological, or religions, have historically justified women's exclusion from political life and continue to inform political discourse in the post-9/11 subtle ways, as well as, today. Moreover, the historical background was included to incorporate a renewed perspective on women's history of gender inequality, drawing on feminist historiography that gained prominence in the 1970s. This approach makes it possible to highlight the nuanced dimensions of women's experiences and to challenge dominant historical narratives shaped by male-centered framework in traditional historiography (Lerner, 1975).

1.1. Historical overview of the gender inequality in the political life

Antiquity

It is generally assumed that women and men were equal in some distant prehistoric time. This common knowledge of traditionalists was based on ancient Greek mythology, more specifically ancient epic poems about the Amazons Dahomey. Their idea is mainly determined by the ethnographical findings of the Minoan society in Crete. Frescoes were depicting Minoan women in a way that suggested that they held a high position in society. They were portrayed in the daily life of palaces and the worship of a mother goddess was the keystone of Minoan religion (Guthrie, 1961: 18).

However, one of the main feminist philosophers of the 20th century, Simone de Beauvoir (1956) stated, "The Golden Age of Women is only a myth. Society has always been male; political power has always been in the hands of men". Contemporary ethnographers found out that there was not any evidence for the "matriarchy" but rather for "*matrilocality*" of the prehistoric society. And, contrary to the belief of matrilineal societies, it was still a male relative from the women's side who controlled the economic assets and main family decision (Martin and Voorhies, 1975: 187). The same applies to the Minoan culture, which hypothetically should have laid similar foundations of governance in Bronze Age Greece, where in reality the society had a patriarchal culture (Thomas, 1973: 190).

Feminist historians supposed that the sexual division for the first time had originated during the pre-agricultural Nomadic period and it was postulated by the existence of hunting and gathering societies (de Beauvoir, 1956; Lerner, 1986). Women devoted their lives to childbearing, nursing and pregnancy. Therefore, the men and women division emerged from *biological sex differences*. However, such differences were not connected with the physical strength *per se* but

rather by the merely reproductive function of women. To the contrary, men during this period through hunting and later on, through the domestication of animals learnt about their brutality and violence (Fisher, 1979). Here a logical question may arise: why should we have to doubt the approach based on biological differences? Scholars agree that this point is based on the androcentric models that presumed the “naturalness” of women’s mothering. The child-bearing and child-rearing for women is a culturally constructed element. In reality, human beings do not possess fixed biological instincts (Rodgers, 2020); rather, women’s behavior, understood as “gender performativity” (Butler, 1990), have been shaped through the long historical evolution of society and the entrenchment of socio-gender roles.

Later on, once the Neolithic Revolution took place, characterized by the transition from Nomadic lifestyle to settled, sexual roles started to be clearer. Women had to perform the functions of nurse and servants, while authority and community rights belonged to men, which later would be transferred to his descendants (de Beauvoir, 1956). Meanwhile, the agriculture changed to a settled one and this contributed to the *creation of private property*. Private property has a key role in the formation of the patriarchal regime due to the fact that women had an asymmetrical allocation of leisure time. After the emergence of private property, the question of the inheritance rules emerged too. Therefore, women’s subordination was institutionalized by marriage, which helped to control women’s reproductive activity. According to F. Engels’ theory (1884), the historical defeat of women appeared in the period of the emergence of private property, when the rights of the ownership of the land were appropriated by men. Later, the right of inheritance for women almost completely passed into the hands of men during the years of the spread of the first monotheistic religions.

There is currently a debate between traditionalists and feminists about egalitarian marriage in the Antiquity period. There is an opinion that equality existed in Ancient societies, since at that time the institution of patriarchy had not yet developed. However, there is notable archeological and ethnographic evidence that states that marriage represented not a mutual agreement of equal parties, but the total relationships of exchange between one man and another, where women figures only as one of the objects in the exchange (Lévi-Strauss, 1955). Thus, in a patriarchal regime, a woman is the property of her father, and then later she becomes totally suppressed by her husband (de Beauvoir, 1956). And this is the beginning of a period of female subordination.

The concept of women’s subjugation in archaic states was codified *in ancient law*: Mesopotamian law, Codex of Hammurabi, the Middle Assyrian Laws and the Hittite Laws. Thus, the labor division based on the sexual differences shifted to the ideas of hierarchy and the power of some men over other men and all women. The above-mentioned laws institutionalized the abortion rights, punishment for the miscarriage, levirate marriage, punishment for adultery committed by women, divorce, rape, regulation of inheritance, marital property and incest. The

laws of archaic states allow us to understand the values and societal structures of the community. Therefore, by codifying laws related to women's freedom, the agency was shifted from the husbands and became the matter of the state. Thus, the metaphor of the patriarchal family as the main cell of the society of the healthy organism of the public community was first expressed in Mesopotamian law (Lerner, 1986). By transferring family status into the legal dimension of the public law during the period of classical Antiquity, women's economic status and reproductive capacity were inevitably associated. Therefore, it had institutionalized the unequal class position between men and women. Moreover, with the emergence of the laws of the first civilization the phenomenon of slavery appeared as well. This historical episode is also important for us, as there was a class stratification among women which gave them discrepancies in rights depending on social stratification (Lerner, 1986).

Another key factor which affected the subordination of women is religion. There are numerous evidences that the Biblical, Quran and Torah narratives had incorporated the elements of Sumerian and Mesopotamian texts (Lerner, 1986). Thus, the laws adopted during the existence of these Mesopotamian and Sumerian civilizations are reflecting existing norms that smoothly flowed into the foundations of religious movements of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Therefore, for example, from the point of view of the Bible, woman was created from man's rib and Eve was the reason for humankind's fall from grace. It is believed that men are the creators of the entire human race. The Book of Genesis has for a long time laid a powerful influence on societal core values and gender norms not favoring women. For instance, Genesis narrates that "Woman, in her alliance with the snake brought sin and the death in the world" (Genesis 3: 1-24). This powerful statement explained for the Classical Antiquity society that women should be excluded from the active participation within the community and that the very symbol of that community and that compact with God should be the male one (Lerner, 1986). Therefore, Christianity began to be dominated by the idea of the God-the-Father, while the idea of the Mother-Goddess was abandoned and replaced with sinfulness and uncleanness of women (Ezekiel 36: 16-17).

Similarly, to the Bible, the Quran states that "the woman is created from a rib" (Sahih al-Bukhari 60:6), which makes her more fragile and a man has to protect her. Islam, which was formed later (around 7th century) than the rest of the religions has established that, despite the equality of men and women, there is "one sphere of the superiority of husband and it is his status of the head of the family" (Surah al-Baqarah 2:228). Thus, by giving a man power in the family, prohibitions are imposed on a woman in the form of appearance, lifestyle and reproductive health, and a system of punishments is created for her, which is not proportional to men. To illustrate it, according to the hadith in Sahih Bukhari, the "*diyyah*" (blood money) for killing the man is equal to 100 camels, while killing a woman is worth 50 camels (Sunan Abu Dawood: 4547; Sunan An-Nasa'i: 4792). Despite the fact that the Quran restricts the rights of women only within the family,

de facto men have not allowed women to engage in any other activity for centuries, except for the preservation of the home hearth.

As in Islam and Christianity, in Judaism the God covenanted and contracted only with males. Only males could become imams, rabbis and priests, women were excluded from the religious rituals, they were segregated in temples, in religious courts women's testimonies are considered as unreasonable. As in Islam, there is an inequality in the "worth" of a soul in Judaism. According to Leviticus, a man's soul costs 50 shekels, while a woman's soul costs 30 shekels (Leviticus 27: 2). Thus, for all the monotheistic religions it is men who live and move the history.

Middle Ages

During the Medieval period women's rights were determined based on the feudal system of relationships and continued influence of the religion. Since the private and public rights during feudalism involved fragmentation of authority, there was also the confusion of women's rights which faced the same tendency from elevation to reduction. After the establishment of the Roman and Greek codes women had no right to own property, and the inheritance system remained predominantly patrilineal. However, during the feudal period the domain of property was switched to the suzerain who could be a noble woman also in case of the absence of the male heirs (de Beauvoir, 1956). During this period women became political actors, however, they had to act like *virago* (Latin: "acting like a man") in order to keep the power (Föber, 2013). Among notable examples are: Urraca, the Queen of Castile-Léon (1109-1126); Petronilla of Aragón (1137-1162); Joan I of England and Queen of Sicily. Female reign in Europe shaped new forms of ruling, such as, Regent Queen and Queen Consorts. The female leadership was legitimized and evaluated positively (Föber, 2013), but the spread of the negative feminine stereotypes like submission and physical weakness inspired by the religion was one of the reasons for justifying the discourse that women are not capable of ruling the state. Moreover, in some cases, like France, women leadership was forbidden by the introduced Salic law of Succession. During this period, the tradition of exchanging women is strengthening, but it is reaching a new level and is consolidated in the form of diplomatic marriages which helped to build more stable political alliances between Medieval states. As an example, we can recall Emma of Normandy married the Danish King Cnut in 1017, who killed her husband Æthelred II (Earenfight, 2006).

In addition to religion, social norms were also established through the release of Conduct Books for women. The majority of these prescriptions were written by men. One of the earliest pieces is the Occitan "Ensenhamen" written by Garin lo Brun (1155) which recommends women to dress with cautionary remarks on love (Krueger, 2008: 161). Another notable example is the poem "Livre des Manières" written by Etienne de Fougères which prescribed social estates and statuses for all women of the fourth estate. Apart from it, kings and noblemen, like St. Louis, King Louis IX, wrote letters of instructions for both sons and daughters but the "female" spheres

of action were more limited than the “male” one’s. In the late Medieval times texts were shifted to the form of verses and prose and were still written by men. One of the significant works was “Reggimento et costumi di donna” (c. 1308-1320) by Francesco da Barberino written for the Florentine women and advised them to keep the high self-control, maintain an excellent reputation and how to be a decent wife for the husband.

On the lower levels of societal stratification women’s peasant rights were still limited. Women were actively participating in trade, craft, agriculture work (precisely in harvesting) and primitive house management but their impact was unrecognized. Women’s agency was still in the hands of their fathers and after marriage it was transferred to their husband’s authority. They were deprived from the traditionally “masculine positions” and from civil capacities. The later establishment of the Medieval laws which were influenced by canon law and Germanic law cannot be characterized as favourable to women. Women were sought as minors and they were represented by the guardianship of their fathers or husbands. Therefore, the women from peasantry and “middle class” with such conditions did not feel heard and present in the society due to the lack of access to public life and education.

Despite the severity of women's rights and freedoms in the Middle Ages, the unstable status of women in society, which arose due to a gap in inheritance rights, gave rise to proto-feminist texts. One of the examples is the late Medieval works of Christine de Pisan, Italian-born writer and philosopher who wrote the politician guidance for the French King Charles VI. Christine de Pisan offered conducts for women of each social class: the princess, ladies at court, ladies on manors, religious women, wives of merchants and townspeople, poor women and prostitutes. Specifically, the “Trésor de la Cité des Dames” (Treasury of the City of Ladies) prescribed honorable women the instructions on how to survive in the society which was dominated by antifeminist prejudice. Christine de Pisan’s work influenced other female philosophers, like Anne of Beaujeu and Suzanne de Bourbon, and she laid the foundation for a feminist ideological thought that continued to develop during the Renaissance.

Renaissance, the Age of Discovery and the Enlightenment

The Italian Renaissance and its idea of individualism opened a platform for self-expression of individuality, including noble women. They were sovereigns, writers, philosophers, musicians and merchants. However, women in power like Catherine de Medici in France, Elizabeth I in England were considered as exceptions to the rule and were on the throne solely for dynastic reasons no matter the fact of their political achievements. In addition to politics, noble women actively participated in intellectual discussions in salons of the higher levels. One of the peculiarities of the Renaissance period in terms of women in power was that the majority of them, especially in Italy, did not exercise the power rather than had shared responsibilities (King, 1991). Moreover, many Renaissance female rulers could not lead their national armies. Some of them,

like Mme de Rambouillet, the vicomtesse d'Auchy and Mme des Loges who opened their own salon, but in fact it was one of the French intellectual centers in the field of literature and social sciences of the 17th century (Beasley, 2017). During the late Renaissance some wealthy women were able to attribute an education, like Elena Lucrezia Cornaro who was the first woman to earn the doctoral degree of philosophy in 1678 at the University of Padua. Nevertheless, both the university and the Church had not granted her degree in theology (King, 1991). Therefore, during the period of the Renaissance women still remained under the protection of their fathers and husbands. It should also be emphasized that the process of development of women's rights and freedoms during the period of Renaissance was not linear in all European societies. It was also nonlinear within the framework of one country, the rights of a peasant woman were disproportionate to the rights of a noblewoman (King, 1991).

Regardless of the fact that women were still under the guardianship of their family and husbands, the expansion of trade during the Renaissance and the strengthening of commerce and monetary relations, the economic spheres of women's participation expanded. For example, in Ghent in the 14th century women were loan sharks, cloth merchants and money changers (King, 1991). In the 16th century in Geneva, women were involved in the craft manufactory: they embroidered with gold threads and made textile. Some of them were in high positions in manufacturing and the commodity-money industry, but by the end of the Renaissance they were excluded from all high positions and replaced by highly efficient workers.

In the European continent, women have tried on a new role related to housing and household management. This was due to the Age of Discovery (15th-17th century), as men went on long sea voyages and the women were forced to learn home management, which expanded their ruling rights in the long run. During the period of Age of Discoveries, a new dimension of women's subordination appeared, namely in the colonies. Colonization *per se* restructured the colonized society, along with its economy, transforming to the production relations (Etienne, Leacock, 1980). The strategic goal of colonization was exploitation of economic, territorial and human resources. The economic productive relations changed the intrapersonal relations, by introducing the concept of the nuclear family. Apart from that, for the colonizer it was necessary to establish the control of men over other men, as well as, bring the concept of guardianship of father and husband over wife. It was a key variable toward a colonial domination which was supposed to free society from "archaism" and accustom them to "civilization". An additional factor which affected on indigenous women's rights in colonized countries was the Catholic church. Since religion is one of the mechanisms of oppression of women, the idea of a woman's role as a mother was presented in colonized societies and her function had to be exclusively reproductive. Moreover, the introduction of the Western concept of private property has made it possible to further subjugate women and accomplish this to the advantage of men. Therefore, the Age of Discoveries

exacerbated the inequality of women's rights and the existing social stratification (Etienne, Leacock, 1980).

The Age of Enlightenment and its ideology of progress, liberty and rationalism granted more freedom to women. The thinking engines of that time were France, Britain and Germany. Enlightenment philosophers viewed the role of women in society in different ways. For example, Montesquieu blamed wives and husbands on an equal level and he stated that male domination suppresses women talents (Montesquieu, 1975). In contrast to Montesquieu, Rousseau reaffirmed the traditionalist point of view regarding the sex difference between men and women. He mentioned that "the men should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive; the one must have both the power and the will" (Rousseau, 1762). Regarding the women's participation in politics, both Montesquieu and Voltaire criticized the existing Salic law in France and called it absurd (Montesquieu, 1900; Voltaire, 1776).

During this period, women continued to be heads of state, for example, Empress Catherine of Russia or Queen Maria Theresa of Austria. However, women as rulers did not symbolize or guarantee the superiority of women (de Beauvoir, 1956). For example, in the Russian Empire, despite the fact that Catherine II opened the first women's educational institution, the Smolny Institute of Noble Maidens, the influence of the previous code of laws, where women had to obey their husbands, remained in force.

Middle class women in Europe gained relative intellectual independence, and they began to reveal themselves and earn their own living through writing or journalism. Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft were women who made a great contribution to the development of feminism during the Enlightenment. Both of them attacked philosophers of the Enlightenment, especially Rousseau, who insisted on the subordination of women. Macaulay and Wollstonecraft were advocating for the women's equal rights to education, their place in society and political freedom. They have criticized the educational system for rewarding women to be weak, ignorant and timid (Frazer, 2011). According to Macaulay and Wollstonecraft, in order to fit into this image women had learnt how to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness (Wollstonecraft, 1994/1790). They were trying to deconstruct the image of women: if females are uneducated is it because they were outside of the education system; if they are dependent it is because they do not have any inheritance right and property; if they hypocritical that it is because of the existing institution of marriage and social approval, which pay great attention to appearance (Frazer, 2011). The debates and ideas of Macaulay and Wollstonecraft allowed other female activists during the French Revolution to set up their future concepts of sexual equality.

French Revolution

According to popular assumption, the French Revolution introduced wide-range of rights and freedoms. Feminist's scholars tend to believe that the French Revolution did nothing for

women. It was accomplished almost exclusively by men (de Beauvoir, 1956). We can see confirmation of this in the laws adopted by the Jacobins, which, on the one hand, declare equality in relation to divorce (1792) and inheritance rights (1790), but on the other hand, they denied the intellectual abilities of women and focused on her mothering role (Goldstein Sepinwall, 2010). One of them, André Amar, for example, commented on the activities of women's political clubs that females were “ill-suited for elevated thoughts and serious meditation” (Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860, II/1793). Jacobin leader, Robespierre, proclaimed that men and women have different responsibilities in the society. He related the “strength and thoughtfulness” as the male traits, once female one’s were “delicacy and being pleasing, as well as, her encouraging talents” (Duval, 1914). Moreover, Robespierre believed that men and women should not study the same materials, since men are more capable of studying the abstract sciences. According to Robespierre, women have to contribute to the topics which require sensitivity and imagination, like morality, history and literature for the public good of the society (Berthe, 1974).

At the same time in the midst of the French Revolution women were associated with the active participation in marches and fought for their rights. Some historians have claimed that in October 1789 armed women of all estates as well as the radical wing of the National Guard participated in a march on Versailles demanding economic reforms and return of the royal family to Paris (Levy, Applewhite, Johnson, 1980). This march actually led to changes: King Louis XVI returned to Paris and ordered the issue of bread. However, the previously mentioned Mary Wollstonecraft witnessed the French Revolution and noticed in her work “An Historical and Moral View on the French Revolution” (1794) that women together with men who were dressed as women were participating in the march of Versailles in 1789 (Wollstonecraft, 1794). Therefore, the active participation of women in the marches of the French Revolution is questioned. Moreover, one’s who were not afraid of establishing their own pamphlets and raising their voices, had faced a harsh destiny. Among one of them was Olympe de Gouges who presented the “The Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizen” (1791), as the reaction to the limitations of the revolutionary rhetoric on gender equality of “The Declaration of Human and Civil Rights (1789)”. She was claiming the equality rights for women in education, political life, employment and doubted the universalistic nature of “The Declaration of Human and Civil Rights”. Meanwhile, in 1792 the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women was created as a response to the new government's neglect of the proposal for economic reforms. However, the Society existed for a few months until the National Convention of the French Republic did not sign the document for ban of all women’s clubs and associations (Diamond, 1990). Olympe de Gouges was guillotined, and before that she was subjected to public attacks aimed at discrediting her mental health and cognitive capacities. Apart from that, other female activists were trying to express their political disagreement with the political course of Jacobins. One of them, Mme Roland, opened her political

salon, which frequently visited Robespierre, Condorcet and other politicians. Mme Roland had a high influence on the newly-established authority which she was often criticizing. As a result, she was guillotined for expressing her disagreement with the political course of the Jacobins. Another more radical example of female's participation in politics during the French Revolution is Charlotte Corday who had assassinated Marat as an act of protest.

The French Revolution granted women mere rights and it did not liberate them politically. Moreover, women's political freedom faded during the Reign of Terror and following a series of executions of Olympe de Gouges, Mme Roland and Charlotte Corday. Consequently, there was no feminist surge, as is commonly believed by historians, during the French Revolution. However, the women's participation in political actions went beyond the traditional framework making themselves active agents of social life. (McMillan, 2000). The later rise to power of Napoleon and his Code of Laws abolished the rules enacted during the Revolution and imprisoned the women in the houses bringing them back to the pre-Enlightenment times. Women again became the property of their fathers and husbands and their primary role was seen in the mothering.

The counter-revolution in France and the subsequent rule of Napoleon slowed down the spread of feminism in Europe. As a response to the French Revolution, many European countries turned to repressive governance. The Russian Empire, German Confederation and Austrian Empire brutally suppressed all revolutionary uprisings, including women's movements. Therefore, politics of the European sovereigns were striven to set the centralized governing model with strict and hierarchical gender norms, based on male domination in families, state-building and religious institutions in order to control the 'antisocial behavior' (Offren, 2000).

The 1848 "Springtime of Peoples" and Industrial Revolution

The revolutionary movement of 1848 so-called "Springtime of Peoples" in Europe introduced a new criterion of nationhood which was based on the "decisive importance" of institutions and culture of both the educated elite and common people (Hobsbawn, 1975), including women. As a result, primary and secondary education had become available for women in Italy, Germany, France, England, Spain, Norway, Greece, Finland, Poland. (Offren, 2000). The leaders of nationalist movements were promoting education for women in order to gain the demographic profit for the future renewal of the workforce and military recruitment for the prosperity of a new type of state. Apart from education, symbolic attributes of the female goddess, like Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, were once again used to consolidate national ideas.

The Industrial Revolution, which was characterized by the introduction and optimization of manufacturing and the development of new systems for transport communications, gave a new impulse to women's emancipation in Europe. Several new progressive economic sectors were dominated by female workers. Furthermore, the greater part of the contribution to the new industrial economy was performed by women (Berg, 1993). The process of urbanization

enabled them to work outside of the household and, therefore, made them more visible in the society. The subsequent economic transition from subsistence to cash changed the idea of gender roles by extension of participation of women and children in the manufacturing production. Due to the fact that the right to inherit and own property remained in the hands of men, the fluctuations of the market economy forced educated single women of the established middle class to provide for themselves on their own and become a new labor force (Offren, 2000). This tendency had given rise to a new debate in European societies about the female destiny in mothering and keeping the household.

As the result of the Industrial Revolution the family economic model was destroyed and replaced with the new less advantageous for women model of labour. Moreover, during this period a clash was noticed between landed property and personal property. Previously, women were in a dependent position on men and were bound by the right of inheritance. As the result of the Industrial Revolution, the principle of the unity of the family was lost middle-class women became financially independent due to the rules of the liquidity of capital which allowed its owner to dispose of it without any barriers (de Beauvoir, 1956). Women had to choose between the traditional archetypal path and the new role of a worker. Meanwhile, the new working class began to be united in the trade unions, and women were no exception. The creation of trade unions became a new instrument to mobilize masses (Hobsbawn, 1975), and this allowed them to raise issues of their rights, such as irregular working hours, child and female labour. Single working women demanded educational and labor rights for themselves (Tilly, 1994). Even though women largely contributed to the creation of the middle class throughout the Industrial Revolution, new social relations were still benefiting men and women's activity was limited to domesticity (Tilly, 1994). During this period, there was a worldwide economic upswing, the new system of liberal capitalism required more land and labor, creating the camp of "winners" and "losers". In this regard, the ideas of Marx and Engels are spreading by influencing different groups of society.

Socialism

The ideas of socialism developed by K. Marx and F. Engels gave a new impetus to the idea of female emancipation. Engels in his work "*Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*" (1884) concludes that "the overthrow of mother-right was the historical defeat of the female sex". According to Engels, women became the slave of men and her reproductive system was used as an instrument (Engles, 1884). He points out that the "degradation" of women's position in the family, and later on, in the society overall, was noticed among the Greek of the Heroic and Classical Age (Engles, 1884). The exclusive superior role of man was shown while the patriarchal model of family was developed. Engels declares that monogamy is based on the male supremacy, the main purpose of which is to establish exact paternity for a fair and natural inheritance right (Engles, 1884). Engels pointed out another crucial factor that had affected

women's position in society was the creation of slavery. Therefore, under these conditions, monogamy took on a specific form, where the rules were set only for women, and not for men (Engles, 1884). Compared to other family models, monogamy was characterized by the strong marriage bond, which could not be easily terminated. Only men were entitled to the right of the divorce. Engels acknowledged Marx's idea that the first division of labor was the one between men and women for the propagation of children (Marx, 1909) and developed this idea by binding the first class oppression which was the one between men and women (Engles, 1884). The Industrial Revolution made women the bread-winner of the family, and made no place for the male's supremacy, except the abuse of women (Engles, 1884). The women regained their rights, especially the right to divorce. Through the prism of Marxist economic theory, Engels explains that harmonizing women's economic rights leads to a decrease in male dominance in monogamous relationships, which makes women more liberate in the political and social field, due to the fact that the rights for private property lost its economic importance. Only after the Socialist Revolution that would erase class society, women and men will become perfectly equal. Therefore, Marx gave the priority of the class revolution over sexual equality.

Meanwhile, Karl Marx in "The Capital" highlighted that the inclusion of female labor led to changes in family relations, creating more space for egalitarianism and eroding the patriarchal dependence on men (Marx, 1909). Nevertheless, Marx also emphasizes that married women were highly exploited in factories, as their approach to work was more responsible than unmarried women, since they had to financially support their families. Thus, he argues that "women's true qualities are warped to her disadvantage, and all the moral and delicate elements in her nature become the means for enslaving her and making her suffer" (Marx, 1909). The main reason why there were often various kinds of workers' arbitrariness is that women were not aware how to protect themselves and organize themselves into workers' unions (de Beauvoir, 1956). The activity of women's trade union organizations led to the establishment of the Labor law in the United Kingdom. The new regulation was limiting the working hours for female workers and the night work for children was prohibited. Further unionism's activism had improved the rights of women's workers at the legislative level by introducing the limitations of the working day from 12 to 10, establishment of the weekday, leave pay in case of pregnancy.

Socialist feminism was also developing during this period. Its ideological inspiration, besides Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, was August Bebel the co-founder of the German Social Democratic Party. In his book "*Woman and Socialism*", he reviews women's rights and contrasts them with capitalism, emphasizing that in order to end oppression, it is necessary to give women the right to vote and provide for them other equal civil rights (Bebel, 1879). His influence led to the organization of the Socialist Feminist Congress in 1892 in France which led to unification and strengthening of the feminist movement worldwide. Socialist feminists demanded the erosion of

class struggles and equality in civil rights between men and women. They had organized another meeting in 1896 demanding more political rights for women and requesting the prohibition to work during the night hours for women. The movement gained a lot of influence within French society and showed the cultural and political split between men and women (Wikander, 2006).

Another important figure which showed the split between socialists and feminists in the 1890s was Clara Zetkin. She provided her own vision of women's questions based on personal experience. Zetkin, while being one of the founders of the Second International group, debated with socialists on various topics, such as, labor restrictions should apply exclusively to pregnant women. Additionally, she was concerned that there is no labor competition between men and women, there is only capitalism that exploits women's labor. Zetkin's central attention of the women's question was on gaining the full equality of rights between men and women and then the socialist revolution would be achieved. This argument was not in line with the Second International's main goal, as they put the socialist revolution as the basis of the fight with capitalist enemies, ignoring women's rights. As the result, women's rights activists split from the socialists, not willing to wait for the socialist revolution.

The suffrage movement and internationalization of the feminism

The wars triggered women to assert their political rights louder. The explosion of the suffrage movement occurred during the First World War, however, its embryonic stage was noticed during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. Women on both sides of belligerents called for a cease-fire. One of the French journals "Le Droit des femmes: Journal politique" published women's call against war and reaffirmed their political right to protest "in the name of humanity" (Le Droit des femmes, 1870). All in the same breath, German women presented their manifesto and demanded for "Peace, Bread and Work" (Freidensruf an die Frauen Deutschlands, 1870). In Britain, where the Chartist movement boomed and women's suffrage became an acute problem, an article in "Englishwoman's Review" was published with a significant thought: "Our moral is give all over Europe political power, and a great peaceful influence will thus be created, which will immediately tend to diminish the frequency of wars, and may ultimately put an end to war altogether" (Englishwoman's Review, 1870)

Furthermore, a debate on women's voting rights had been initiated in Britain at the moment. In 1867 John Stuart Mill had a speech in the British Parliament regarding the equality of voting rights for women, explaining that female subordination is contrary to social progress. Mill published the book "*Subjection of Women*", which as a result gained wide recognition and was replicated all over the world. In this work he is advocating for elimination of all social constructs of "women nature" and for providing the same level of liberties for women as for men (Mill, 1878). In Mill's opinion, women's position in the society could change once all the cultural and legal social norms sank into oblivion. John Stuart Mill's narrative on women's suffrage was spread all

over the European continent. As the new means of communication, such as international press, postal communication and railroads became more available for access, it helped to raise awareness globally. One of the examples is creation of the feminist network during the International Congress of Women in 1878 (Wikander, 2006).

The first country to guarantee partial suffrage rights for women was Sweden in 1862. The year after Finland followed her example by granting local suffrage for taxpaying women. The question of accepting suffrage rights in the Scandinavian countries was explained by the ability to pay taxes, since in the middle of the 18th century, women owned and managed farms. The industrialization also created a new cluster of independent economic individuals both men and women. It helped to shift the suffrage from a basis of property and individuality to solely individuality, decreasing masculinity in the political sense (Sjögren, 2009). Apart from that, the dissolution of the Society of Status led to the strengthening of the role of municipality making it a basis for the constitution. In this regard, the nature of the political system changed and it made the individual elector genderless. It helped women to unite and participate in women's movements in order to enlarge women's political rights even on the municipal level.

The first full suffrage rights for both white and indigenous Maori women were adopted in New Zealand in 1893. The struggle for equality in New Zealand was initiated by Mary Ann Muller and Mary Ann Colclough who were influenced by John Stuart Mill, as well as by circulation periodicals, such as, the Englishwoman's Journal. However, the guarantee for suffrage rights was connected with the abolishment of the property qualifications, which resulted in the application of the principle "one man - one vote" and creating a lacuna in legislation (Macdonald, 2009). This allowed women's movements to become more active, sending pamphlets and collecting petitions, which resulted in the adoption of a new Electoral Act 1893.

The suffrage movement was associated with the development of the feminist movement since the early 20th century. Historians characterize this period in women's history as "*belle époque*" which allowed women to enter public life thanks to industrialization, urbanizations, imperialist expansion, worker's oppression and militarism (Offren, 2000). Those processes helped them to raise their voices louder regarding women's reproductive health issues, economic independence, and political right to vote. The word "feminism" itself, although first used by a scholar Charles Fourier in 1832, was updated and actively used in different countries where women's rights had become a stumbling block.

Therefore, female activists from both the United States and socialists in Europe united and organized the International Woman Suffrage Association in 1902 in Washington. The Association held 2 Conferences in order to make the changes in suffrage law and reinforce the pressure on political bodies regarding women's rights issues. The last Conference took place in 1913 in Budapest and the main goal was to prepare a survey on the women's rights situation of

the country members. However, outlines of the collected information showed that female activism in Europe was divided and not supported by the ruling elites, which claimed that the women's suffrage could be postponed (Rubio-Marín, 2014).

The First World War created more tensions within the female activists' group by dividing them between those who wanted to "serve the front and the state" in the combatant countries and those who were pacifist. The last ones created the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. However, meanwhile in Russia World War I exaggerated the conflict between the state and society, especially with women.

Russian Revolution

By this time, women in Russia were actively forming associations and participating in underground revolutionary activities, for example, in *narodnaya volya*. The weakness of Nicholas II's government, the growing influence of the suffrage movement, the development of women's educational courses, access to foreign literature all allowed Russian women to unite and create their own ideological base and collective consciousness for the protection of women's rights (Ruthchild, 2010). After the first Russian Revolution in 1905, Bloody Sunday, female organizations started to bloom even more actively, mainly focused on lobbying for female voting rights. In 1906 there were visible results in the Kadet vote in the State Duma in favor for women's suffrage mandatory. The First World War, which was aimed at strengthening the masculine role of Nicholas II, provoked the unification of the women's movement, including peasants in it. The war created food and financial shortages, and this led to increased discontent in society, which resulted in a female protest riot. The female workers of Petrograd organized a mass demonstration on the International Women's Day, demanding the restoration of food chains and timely payment for those mobilized for participation in the war. The women's demonstration intensified mass protest sentiments, initiating the beginning of the February Revolution in 1917. After the transfer of power from the hands of the tsar to the hands of the Provisional Government, elections were called, in which, according to provisional documents, women were restricted in their rights to participate. In response, the women organized a new protest in March 1917, which resulted in the signing of Constituent Assembly elections that officially recognized that "*any member of the population, without distinction of gender, and equal suffrage can participate in elections through direct elections and secret ballot using the principle of proportional representation*" (Polozhenie o vyborah v Uchreditel'noe sobranie, 1917). After the fall of the Provisional Government and the transition of power to Bolsheviks, they have consolidated the idea of gender equality in the Constitution of Soviet Russia in 1918, becoming the first state to take a big step towards gender-neutral citizenship (Ruthchild, 2010). Besides that, Bolsheviks had taken a revolutionary step towards the adoption of laws on divorce, abortion, paternity, equal salary, guarantees of women's labor protection, maternity leave, and benefits for nursing mothers in 1918. These policies have

influenced the Western world, thereby encouraging women to fight even more actively for their rights. As a result, women in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Austria gained partial suffrage. However, it is important to note that soon the Soviet authorities and the most prominent revolutionaries, such as Alexandra Kollontai, expressed concern about the growth of the women's movement, which could lead to the separation of the female part of the working people from the class struggle (Yukina, 2024). The Bolsheviks used the feminist movement not to establish social and political equality, but to carry out economic modernization of the country, which required female workers. Thus, there was a transition from the ideology of individual freedom to the absence of personal rights and mobilization for the construction of communism.

The interwar period and the Second World War

After the end of the First World War, feminist organizations, International Council of Women and the International Woman Suffrage Association, tried to bring the women's question into the forefront agenda of the newly established universal organization, League of Nations. They demanded inclusion of women in all branches of the organization, as well as the renouncement of human trafficking upon joining the League. In addition to the inclusion of women in the League of Nations, the Versailles Agreement, which was signed after the end of World War I, included clauses on equal rights between men and women, as well as women's participation in the decision-making process of labor organizations (The Versailles Treaty, 1919).

Both the revolution in Russia and the global course towards equality have set the direction to the adoption of the suffrage law in other countries. To illustrate that, in 1919 the Netherlands adopted full suffrage; in 1920 Czechoslovakia; in 1921 Sweden; in 1922 Ireland; in 1928 the United Kingdom and Spain in 1931. During this period, it appeared that a window of opportunity had opened for women to engage in both national and international politics. In contrast, this trend did not impact several countries, which underwent dramatic radicalization following the ratification of the Versailles Treaty.

Participation in the First World War provoked the emergence of a demographic pit among the generation of adult men on both sides of war adversaries. This factor became decisive in the interwar period and it outlined some trends in the interior politics of belligerents. First of all, since there was an urge to fulfill the demographic gap and keep the gender pyramid in balance, countries such as Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and England implemented an initiative to reproductive control, which was aimed at increasing the population growth (Offren, 2000). Secondly, both in the nascent fascist and Nazi countries, as well as in the countries of a democratic camp, there was a tendency for women to withdraw from work and focus on motherhood. To the greater extend, this policy had affected right radical governments, which taken had taken a course towards the remasculinization of the society (Offren, 2000) in order to prepare its population for

a new global conflict for the rebalance of the world order and reconstruction of the Versailles-Washington system of the international relations.

Mussolini, who seized power in 1922 with the objective of restoring order following the post-war turmoil, reestablished the patriarchal structure within Italian society. He saw the female destiny in motherhood and raising children, which was the women's supreme duty in order to serve the Fatherland. As for the suffrage rights, initially, Mussolini tried to appeal to feminist's sentiments and claimed that giving women the rights to vote would bring more prudence to Italian politics, but later his rhetoric shifted. In addition to the fact that Mussolini subordinated the woman to the interests of the state, they were advised to leave their workplace, and their salaries were halved in order to make men the head of the family again. Thereby, women became bonded to their husbands too (de Beauvoir, 1956).

In Germany the situation was different. After the end of the war, women in the Weimar Republic obtained both passive and active suffrage rights in 1919. They had the opportunity to vote and to be appointed to political positions until Adolf Hitler came to power. With the rise of Nazi power in Germany, the slogan "*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*" (Children, Kitchen, Church) was entrenched as a central ideological framework defining women's place within the society (Gupta, 1991). Consequently, female politicians were excluded from political life, justified by the ideology that women should not encroach upon the male's world. Feminist movements were compared to Jewish conspiracy which "sought to destroy the German family".

Despite the policies aimed at the reestablishment of the "patriarchal" family structure, women continued their fight for their equal economic and political rights, as well as, for the establishment of stable peace. In 1919 participants of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILF) expressed their concern about the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, claiming that it would lead to another war in the future. The organization's members participated in various conferences and discussions on minority rights and disarmament issues. An illustrative example is the call for the universal ratification of the Kellogg-Brian Pact which outlawed war as an instrument of national policy. As the world order grew increasingly fragile, the necessity arose to convene the 1932 Disarmament Conference, with the representatives from the women's organizations. One of the activists, Adele Schreiber-Krieger, contributed to the discourse at the conference by addressing the issue of women's political agency, asserting that the inclusion of women in political decision-making on the war and peace agenda could lead to the elimination of war (Offren, 2000). However, the women's agency started to be more visible even before the disarmament conference, when they had started to collect petitions from women for peace globally. Nonetheless, their advocacy for peace was rendered ineffective in the Hitler's rise to power and the subsequent Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations.

When it became obvious that the global tensions escalated, fueled by Hitler's revanchist sentiments; the socioeconomic repercussions of the Great Germany, and the ambitions of various states to revise their territorial boundaries, women's organizations increasingly adopted left-leaning political coordinates, intensifying their advocacy for peace and their condemnation of acts of aggression. Women's International Organizations expressed their concern and condemned Mussolini's intentions to invade Ethiopia. Following Hitler's invasion of Poland, feminist organizations became increasingly disillusioned, questioning the efficacy of their efforts and invoking moral arguments to remind political leaders of the difficulties of nurturing future generations in an environment dominated by brutality and conflict.

During World War II, women in belligerent countries were mobilized to participate both in military actions and in civil logistics. Females discovered new roles both in the military and in the labor market. They took up positions that had previously belonged only to men. A notable transformation in the conventional gender roles structures has occurred across European countries from mothers into soldiers or fully emancipated individuals (Campbell, 1993). The most notable mobilization among the female population occurred in the Soviet Union, where women participated on an equal basis with men in order to repel the attacks of Nazi Germany (Offren, 2000).

The post-war period of the women's participation in politics

The war intensified the female's emancipation and granted women full rights of citizenship. This trend was reinforced by the creation of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946 in the newly established universal organization, the United Nations (the UN), which adopted a mandate enlarging women's political, civil, educational, social and economic rights. In the following years, the Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, which was pivotally formulated by the First Lady of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt. The Declaration affirmed the equal rights of men and women, positing that the realization of such equality would foster a more progressive and liberated society (DHR, 1948). In 1952 the United Nations Charter adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, which was supposed to eliminate all existing forms of political discrimination towards women's participation in politics. The universal nature of the convention obliged Member States to eliminate all forms of existing discrimination, thus officially recognizing and consolidating equality between men and women. Thus, the UN has become one of the leading organizations responsible for maintaining gender balance globally.

The strengthening of women's rights progressed with the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 alongside the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975-1985. Within the framework of the Decade for Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted in 1979. The main aim of the Convention was to prospect women's rights on

a more comprehensive level, including social, educational, labor, political and cultural life (CEDAW, 1975). The Convention pointed out that “discrimination against women violates the principle of rights and respect for human dignity” (CEDAW, 1975). The Convention addressed longstanding and deeply entrenched issues concerning women’s rights - particularly in areas such as marriage, inheritance, and equal pay, that had persisted as points of contention for centuries. Moreover, within the framework of the Decade for Women, the international conferences were held every five-year interval: in Mexico City in 1975; in Copenhagen in 1980; in Nairobi in 1985, to discuss the interim results of monitoring women’s rights globally and to reformulate the conceptual foundations underpinning efforts to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination. Nevertheless, these initiatives have heightened global awareness of gender inequality, they have also given rise to new challenges, including the outcomes of the non-binding nature of the United Nations resolutions and decisions. It affected negatively on the process of ratification of the relevant UN documents. For example, the United States together with Sudan, Iran and Somalia have not ratified yet the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Apart from that, the discussion and formulation of documents on women’s rights often becomes a space for political debates between opposing sides, such as the antagonistic confrontation during the Cold War. The inability to implement all proposed regulation can also be attributed to the continued male domination in key political positions at the national level. Consequently, although women were formally included as delegates to conferences held during the United Nations Decade for Women, they often did not articulate their own perspectives and concerns. Rather they advanced ideological positions aligned either with the Western capitalist bloc or Eastern socialism. Additionally, the United Nation had been criticized for application of American liberal feminism in the functioning of its institutions, without taking into consideration a non-Western view on women’s issues (Ghodsee, 2009). Apart from that, the efficacy of the United Nations’ initiatives to address gender discrimination is limited by the persistence of patriarchal frameworks within its official discourse, wherein women are depicted as symbolic representation of the “collective unconscious”, largely overlooking the intersecting dimensions of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Zinsser, 2002).

The contemporary framework of women’s rights issues and barriers to its participation in politics are articulated in the Beijing Declaration, adopted in 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations entity, UN Women. As a result, the Platform for Action was established and participants of the Beijing Conference proclaimed that in the twenty-first century women’s leadership will have the primary role. The creation of Platform for Action was created as a measurement of reinforcement of the commitment on the strengthening of women’s rights and elimination of any form of gender-based discrimination in politics, economic sphere, media and in social life as a whole.

The Beijing Declaration (1995) underscored the persistent problem of women's underrepresentation in political life, both in national institutions and in international organization. At that time, women constituted only 10% of participants in political decision-making, with even lower representation in ministerial positions. This gap illustrates that, despite decades of activism and legal advances, structural barriers to women's political participation remained deeply rooted. The later analyzed post-9/11 context signaled the further reinforcement of these barriers. The dominance of militarized masculinity in political discourse further marginalized women's visibility and authority, reducing their opportunities in precisely those areas of national security and foreign policy, where participation was already weakest. In this sense, the tendencies identified in Beijing found renewed expression in the post-9/11 era, where women continued to be constrained by gendered hierarchies in political institutions.

1.2. The History of American Suffrage Movement and Women's Participation in Politics

An examination of the historical context of the American suffrage movement is essential for understanding the influence of post-9/11 politics on women's participation. The suffrage struggle marked the formation of women's political agency in the United States, laying the foundation for their subsequent engagement in political institutions and shaping the boundaries of their legitimacy as political actors. By looking at this trajectory, it becomes possible to reveal the specificity of the American political environment, which was historically marked by deeply incorporated patriarchal structures that continue to shape opportunities and constraints for women. Situating post-9/11 developments within this longer history allows us to understand not only how women entered political life, but also why the discourse of militarized masculinity could so effectively reassert traditional gender hierarchies, thereby reinforcing structural barriers to women's political activity.

In the United States, the process of women's emancipation emerged in parallel with the processes of rapid industrialization and urbanization that took place following the Civil War. It is generally believed that the female emancipation movement is closely related to the process of active industrialization and urbanization. However, it was not in the case of the United States. The American feminist movement began with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. It was organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, influenced in part by the exclusion of women from the American delegation to the 1840 World's Anti-Slavery Conference held in London. It is not a coincidence that women's activism emerged after the International Anti-Slavery Conference, as a distinctive element of the American feminist movement is its connection with abolitionism (Fraser, 1999). The Convention ended with the signing of the Declaration of Sentiments stating that "men established an absolute tyranny over women". The document claimed that women's electoral, education, and public rights were in the hands of men, and that also the moral code for men and

women functioned differently in case of divorces, adultery and committing crimes (DS, 1848). Participants of the Seneca Falls Convention claimed for “the immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States”. This action allowed to mobilize female activists to fight for their rights, in particular, for the right to vote. Thus, the suffrage movement was born.

In 1850 and until the beginning of the Civil War, the National Woman’s Rights Convention and, later on, the National Suffrage Convention was taking place in order to coordinate and formulate their fight for their civil rights. By aligning themselves with the abolitionist movement, which was particularly active during this period, women activists endeavored to bring greater visibility to issues concerning women’s rights. After the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, suffragists requested the right to vote for people of color as well (de Beauvoir, 1956). Thus, the black people's suffrage, considered by the Parliament and the President in society after the end of the Civil War, allowed the female activists to raise the issue of the women’s rights to vote as well. Moreover, in 1868 suffragists were attempting to lobby both houses of Congress in order to adopt the amendments in the Constitution on women’s right to vote. Their voices remained unheard and as a result, in 1869 was established the National Woman Suffrage Association by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Anthony. During this period, the United States was facing rapid economic growth and accelerated industrialization, which allowed American women to enter the working places. This alignment enabled the suffragists to incorporate labor rights into their agenda, including their issues of worker’s conditions, thereby broadening their appeal and attracting a wider base of social support.

In 1876 as part of the activities of the National Woman Suffrage Association, the female activists created and signed the Declaration of Rights of Women of the United States. In the document which was issued on the United States’ Independence Day, the suffragists stated that despite the nation’s rapid economic growth and the expansion of democratic institutions, the status of women’s rights in the country continued to fall short of its professed principles (DRWUS, 1876). Moreover, they further called upon the government to recognize the full equality of men and women in natural rights; to grant women the right of suffrage; and to reject the prevailing societal dogma that women were created solely to serve men’s interests (DRWUS, 1876). In response to mounting demands for the implementation of women’s suffrage, the Senate established the Woman Suffrage Committee in 1882. In 1886, Susan B. Anthony presented a proposed amendment on women's suffrage to the Senate, which, despite her efforts, failed to gain approval.

Between 1870s-1890s activists of the National Woman Suffrage Association advocated for women’s rights to vote on the territorial level. Consequently, between the 1870s and 1890s, a series of territorial-level referenda on women’s suffrage were held. This campaign ended unsuccessfully for the Association, as not a single referendum voted in favor of women’s suffrage.

Nonetheless, incremental progress occurred, as women in nineteen states were granted limited suffrage rights related to the taxation and bond issues during this time. Apart from that, in 1882 the National Association decided to hold the International Council of Women's rights, where they agreed on the use of violence in their fight for civil rights (Stanton, 1888). Thus, American suffragists initiated their international engagement, contributing to the consolidation and strengthening of the women's movement in Europe.

Another big women's rights organization which was active during this period was American Woman Suffrage Association. Despite the fact that both organizations pursued the adoption of an amendment to the Constitution on women's suffrage as their ultimate goal, the nature of their advocacy was completely different. The National Woman Suffrage Association's actions were aimed at supporting women in broad range situations, from divorce to violation of their work rights. Meanwhile, the American Woman Suffrage Association was focused solely on women's right to vote and the most effective method for attributing suffrage rights they saw in the state-by-state approach (Mintz, 2007). Nonetheless, the American Woman Suffrage Association declined in the 1880s, the members decided to join the National Association in order to consolidate their efforts. In 1890 they formed the National American Woman Suffrage Association under the leadership of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone and subsequently Carrie Chapman Catt.

The growth of women's activism during this period was associated with various social and economic events which took place in the United States during this period. This era witnessed significant growth of the middle class, which increasingly expressed their resentment in relation to labor conditions and the status of their civil rights. Therefore, no longer regarded as radical, the suffrage movement began to draw support from an increasingly broad spectrum of women, including workers, writers and wealthy women.

At the same time, the widespread "normalization" of women's disenfranchisement exerted a notable influence on territorial-level politics. It seemed that the Territory of Wyoming was undergoing "revolutionary" reforms in terms of suffrage rights. In 1869 the full rights to vote and to occupy public positions were given to women in Wyoming, thus, becoming the second place after Sweden (1862) to grant women the right to vote and hold the office. However, closer examination revealed that the actual circumstances were considerably more nuanced. *De facto* the law on women's suffrage was one of the measures aimed at increasing the population of Wyoming, in particular the female population. In reality, Wyoming faced a considerable demographic imbalance, with statistical records indicating a ratio of merely one woman for every six men (Larson, 1965). Apart from that, in addition to the law on women's suffrage, Wyoming had passed a law on the participation of women in the judicial process as jurors. In 1870, Esther Morris was the first woman who was appointed as a Justice of the Peace in the South Pass City, thus becoming

the first woman to hold public office in the United States. Consequently, when Wyoming joined the Union and received statehood, it also became the first place in the United States to grant full women's suffrage. In 1870, the Territory of Utah enacted legislation granting women the right to vote, but, as in the case of Wyoming, the underlying circumstances were more complex than they initially appeared. In Utah, the vast majority of the population are Mormons who practice polygamy. In an attempt to counter federal pressure concerning the practice of polygamy, which was forbidden on the federal level, territorial authorities enacted women's suffrage legislation as a means to secure broader public support and to foster societal consolidation. However, women's suffrage was abolished in 1887, when the Congress passed the Edmund-Tucker Act, which banned polygamy and denounced women's rights to vote in Utah (Flexner, 1996).

American women entered the 20th century with a significant gap in their social and political rights between the states. For instance, while women's suffrage was granted in many western states, parts of the South maintained archaic legal systems, including Louisiana's reliance on the Napoleonic Code and prohibitions preventing women from managing their own incomes in Florida and Georgia. Apart from that, in the early 1900s, trade union associations began to be organized. In 1903 the Women's Trade Union League was established by Leonora O'Reilly, Mary Kenney O'Sullivan and Jane Addams as a response to the rejection of the American Federation of Labor to integrate women into its organizational structure. The primary objective of the League was to advocate for reforms in labor legislation and to improve the working conditions of women. Nevertheless, given the legal and practical disparities between the rights of male and female workers, its members ultimately chose to align themselves with the suffrage movement, which was particularly active during this period. Participants of the Women's Trade Union League were convinced that women's suffrage would directly change their working and living conditions. Thus, participants of the League decided to join the National American Woman Suffrage Association. As a result, the League's agenda came to incorporate aspects of the suffrage movement, as evidenced by the convention adopted in 1907, which set forth the following objectives: equal pay for equal work; the organization of all workers into trade unions; the eight-hour day; a minimum wage scale; equal implementation of all the principles embodied in the economic program of the American Federation of Labor (Jacoby, 1975). In an effort to extend its influence and further mobilize women workers, the League resolved to establish local branches. As a result, the first such branch was founded in San Francisco in 1908, followed by another in New York in 1911. Over time, the League's activities expanded into the public sphere. For instance, it launched campaigns to collaborate with other middle-class women's organizations, with the aim of highlighting and addressing violations of the rights of working women. Apart from that, participants of the Women's Trade Union League opted to support strikes and boycotts by

establishing striking funds as methods of struggle for their rights. A notable example of this was their involvement in the 1909-1910 strike by female garment workers in New York.

During the period between 1910 and 1916, states of Washington, California, Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, Alaska, Montana and Nevada successfully enacted women's suffrage legislation through referenda. This development was facilitated by the emergence of the Progressive Party, founded in 1912 by Theodore Roosevelt, which actively supported the cause of women's voting rights. Additionally, there was a visible political mobilization among suffrage movement participants. In 1913, the National American Woman Suffrage Association organized the Women Suffrage Procession as a direct response to President Woodrow Wilson's refusal to endorse the proposed Women's Suffrage Amendment upon taking office. In the same year, dissatisfied with the strategies of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, Alice Paul founded the Congressional Union for Women Suffrage, which sought to advance women's suffrage through lobbying for enacting the federal constitutional amendment. During World War I the Union together with a militant and radical National Woman's Party organized protests at the White House, criticizing the American administration for prioritizing the promotion of democracy abroad over ensuring democratic rights, specifically women's suffrage, at home (Dumenil, 2007).

One of the significant milestones preceding the adoption of the women's suffrage amendment to the U.S. Constitution was the election of Jeannette Rankin, representing the Republican Party, to Congress in 1917. She became the first woman to hold such a high-ranking national office, an achievement made possible by the passage of women's suffrage legislation in Montana in 1914. Before being elected to Congress, she was the field secretary of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, where, as a part of the duties, she lobbied for a new legislation on women's suffrage at the state level. Apart from that, she had organized numerous strikes, and one of the most notable ones was the immigrant workers strike in Manhattan in 1914.

Another key figure in achieving women's suffrage was Carrie Chapman Catt who was the leader of the National American Woman Suffrage Association since 1915. Prior to her leadership, aside from Susan B. Anthony, were able to articulate a coherent political and ideological framework for the women's suffrage movement. Demonstrating a statesmanlike strategic vision, she crafted a detailed program of action, named as the "Winning Plan", in which she organized participants into distinct groups, each tasked with fulfilling a specific and constructive role within the Association (Flexner, 1996). Another distinctive aspect of Catt's political strategy was her willingness to engage in negotiation and collaboration with Woodrow Wilson's administration, notwithstanding its opposition to women's suffrage at the time.

World War I itself was not a direct cause of the enactment of women's suffrage legislation. However, it significantly raised women's political consciousness, as they increasingly occupied higher jobs positions that had previously been available exclusively for men. In addition

to the war, other crises, including the influenza pandemic, fuel shortages, and economic challenges, contributed to declining public support for President Woodrow Wilson. Faced with shifting opposition strategies and growing pressure before presidential elections, Wilson was compelled to reconsider his stance on women's suffrage. Consequently, he addressed the Senate, urging the adoption of the women's suffrage bill as a war measure in September 1917. Following a protracted legislative process that extended over nearly two years, the women's suffrage bill presented by Susan B. Anthony in 1848, was ultimately passed by Congress in 1919 and subsequently ratified in 1920. The legislation was enshrined in history as the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which affirmed the political equality of women and men.

Nevertheless, the adoption of the amendment did not immediately lead to the full political participation of women in the United States. The political rights of racial and ethnic minority women, in particular, remained largely unaddressed and excluded from the broader suffrage gains until 1965 when the Equal Rights Act was passed. As Flexner (1996) underlined, in the long period of time between 1920 and 1960, around sixty women were elected to the House of Representatives and by 1975 around five percent of them were involved in the state legislatures. Following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, various states continued to enforce local legislation that limited women's participation in political processes. As of 2025, women have held a total of 396 seats in the history of the U.S. House of Representatives, constituting merely 3.5% of all individuals who have served in that body. Similarly, in the Senate, only 64 women, representing approximately 3.2% of the total historical membership, have held office throughout its entire history. Women succeeded in attaining positions as legislators, ambassadors, administrative authorities, Supreme Court justices, and once as Vice President; however, the presidency itself has remained unattained. Even in the present day, women's representation in American political institutions continues to remain disproportionately low. Despite the prominence of influential female political figures in recent decades, such as Geraldine Ferraro, Madeleine K. Albright, Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Nancy Pelosi, Kamala Harris, their public image has been subject to disproportionately gendered scrutiny and derogatory commentary compared to their male counterparts. Analyses of their political activities have often been overshadowed by intense media and public interest in aspects of their private lives, family status, or alleged misconduct, alongside critiques targeting either a perceived lack of traditionally "feminine" qualities or, conversely, the presence of such traits in excess. Both enduring gaps between men and women politicians and disproportionate emphasis on personal life reflect the persistent stigma and deeply rooted societal biases historically directed toward female politicians and women more broadly.

1.3. The role of stigma from the Ancient times to the present days

The inclusion of the analysis of stigma dating back to antiquity is intended to demonstrate the historical continuity of arguments that question women's political capacity. From biological determinism, claims about differences in brain size or physical differences between men and women, to psychoanalytic theories that framed women's nature as inherently apolitical, such discourses have repeatedly been mobilized to legitimize their exclusion from decision-making spheres. These narratives did not simply disappear with the achievement of formal suffrage, rather, they continue to echo in contemporary political discourse and media representation. For instance, the labeling of women leaders as "iron ladies" or other gendered archetypes reflects the persistence of essentialist stereotypes, which became particularly visible in the post-9/11 context. In this way, the historical perspective illustrates how deeply rooted stigmas shape both public perceptions and institutional barriers, ultimately constraining women's participation in American politics after September 11.

Female stigmatization has a long history. In order to understand why the people are skeptical of women politicians, it is necessary to consider the origins of this issue. Followers of the exact sciences, as well as of the humanities, such as psychology, ethnography, religion and history fiercely defend their point of view about the role of women in society.

From the point of view of biological determinism, the division between men and women started in the Stone Age. It was based on the male's physical superiority which they have demonstrated once the first permanent settlements and farming began. "Genetical" and "cultural" aggressiveness of men determined their leading position within the group, while women's bearing and nurturing functions set her inferior status. Furthermore, biological determinism explains that hormones, genes and brain structure are predefining women's desire to be obedient and compliant towards men. Therefore, according to this approach, the low involvement of women in leadership positions within the tribe was predisposed. The followers of the traditionalist approach believe that male's supremacy is universal and natural. Whether within the religious group or from the scientific area, have regarded women's subordination as universal, God-given and natural (Lerner, 1986: 16). They address the "gender asymmetry" to the "naturalness" of different male and female roles which were assigned by God. Traditionalists see the main place of a woman's self-realization in motherhood and in the child bearing. According to traditionalists, one of the key historical factors contributing to gender inequality, the division of labor, is rooted in biological differences as well. For a long period of time they have used biology in order to justify the gender status quo by disadvantaging women and favoring men. This perspective was reinforced by the widespread acceptance of Darwinian theory, which posited that the survival of the species took precedence over individual self-fulfillment. Despite the historically widespread belief that women possessed

smaller brains and exhibited lower levels of cognitive activity compared to men, contemporary research has demonstrated that there is, in fact, substantial parity between male and female brain structure and function (Schmidt, Jorgia, Fast, Christodoulou, Haldane, Kumari, Frangou, 2009). Therefore, women and men have the same set of skills and mental capacities, despite the fact that they might address different approaches to problem-solving, which can, partially, be formed as a result of differences in gender socialization.

Ancient Greek philosophers significantly shaped the development of Western scientific and philosophical thought, including the construction of societal perceptions of women. Aristotle regarded the male contribution to reproduction as “more divine”, arguing that the male principle of movement possessed a superior creative power, while the female provided only the material substrate necessary for generating life. He maintained that men, by virtue of this active principle, were responsible for imparting the soul, whereas women merely produced the corporeal form. Reflecting this biological hierarchy, Aristotle characterized women as passive and intellectually deficient compared to men. In the political sphere, he asserted that was a product of nature and that man, by nature, is a political animal (Aristotle, 1998). Aristotle’s philosophy excluded women from the rights of citizenship, positioning this exclusion as a fundamental element of democratic state. By contrast, in *The Republic*, Plato, guided by this commitment to individualism, argued that men and women shared the same nature with respect to their potential role as guardians of the state. Nevertheless, he maintained that women were physically weaker, thereby suggesting that gender equality could be fully performed only within the framework of a utopian state (Plato, 1937).

During the Middle Ages, appeals to Christian ethics profoundly shaped enduring conceptions of women and their nature. Christianity, underpinned by the notion of biological determinism, reinforced these views through the works and teaching of theologians and religious philosophers. Since Christianity was the basis of the moral structure of society at that time, Christian ideas formed the image of women which remained relevant for a long-lasting historical period. For example, St. Paul reflected on female subordination as follows: “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man...the woman was created for the man” (Corinthians 11: 7-10). St. Ambrose pointed out that it was Eve who led Adam to sin and not Eve by Adam. It is just and right that woman accept as lord and master him whom she led to sin” (de Beauvoir, 1956). In the *Summa Theologicae*, Thomas Aquinas expressed the notion of male supremacy over women, mirroring the hierarchical relationship between Christ and men. He contended that women were destined to exist under male authority influence. Prevailing interpretations of Christian ethics continue to influence perceptions of women in politics. Traditionalists and neoconservatives position their views based on the Christian ethic’s principles to justify their vision on limiting or discouraging women’s participation in public affairs. For instance, Christian nationalism,

articulated in part by the founding fathers of the United States, incorporated patriarchal norms within American statecraft that influenced the struggle for women suffrage (Mitchell, 2025). Moreover, the long-term political marginalization of women, rooted in Christian ethics interpretations and the framing of politics as an exclusively masculine field, has remained one of key barriers to the election of women to the American presidency

Stigmatizing attitudes towards women have also been reflected in the psychological field. From the psychoanalytic point of view, as the creator of its theory, Sigmund Freud, stated that the woman feels that she is a mutilated man (de Beauvoir, 1956: 68). He was convinced that “women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own” (Freud, 1925: 255). In Freud’s opinion, “for women the anatomy is a destiny” (Freud, 1924: 274), therefore, she will be subordinated to a man in any case. He posited that a girl’s psychological development is characterized by an inherent quest to identify and internalize a substitute for the absence of male’s sexual organ, toward whom she harbors feelings of jealousy originated in early childhood. According to Freud, this substitution would typically be fulfilled by either a husband or a son, with the mother-son relationships conceived as the most meaningful and psychologically significant bond in a woman’s life. He characterized women as more passive and less aggressive than men and it was constructed during the Oedipal period. Freud theorized that women’s unresolved Oedipal complex compels them to seek achievement in domains traditionally associated with masculinity. De Beauvoir partially criticized Freud’s theory, arguing that it functions as a tool for masculinization of subjectivity, in which women can achieve self-realization only at the cost of sacrificing their independence and freedom, thus excluding their aspirations for political participation (de Beauvoir, 1956). Within this framework, women are compelled to reject their own subjectivity and transfer it into the hands of men (Zakin, Leeb, 2011). Such an interpretation, grounded in a male-centered model of relationships, allows right-wing politicians to form a public discourse that promotes the deepening of stigma and legitimize exclusionary narratives. Notably, the psychoanalyst Karen Horney offered a critical perspective on Freud’s theory, arguing that both psychoanalysis and the cultural context in which his ideas emerged were shaped by an inherent masculine bias (Horney, 1926). Although her analysis also drew upon Freud’s psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious mind, she advanced a contrasting perspective by suggesting that it is, in fact, men who experienced envy, which she named as “womb envy”, toward women’s reproductive capacities and motherhood (Horney, 1926).

In the 1970s, among the revision of the “history of women”, anthropological data were analyzed, providing substantial evidence for the historical formation and consolidation of patriarchal systems, much of which continues to inform contemporary debates. Anthropologists shifted the focus from the importance of Men-the-Hunters to the role of women in ancient societies. According to feminists’ findings, women invented basketry and pottery; they have

created horticulture (Slocum, 1975: 49). Women and children more actively participated in the main food supply which reproduced by gathering activities and game hunting. Moreover, anthropologists found out that the responsibilities of the both sexes were equally vital for the tribal existence. The main reason for the known discourse on male dominance in the ancient societies is that the studies and archaeological research were committed by the male anthropologists. They tended to disproportionately emphasize men's activity, particularly hunting, as central to evolutionary progress.

The same applies to world history, the field which is traditionally dominated by male historians and as a result, women have been silenced or uncovered. One theoretical approach to addressing this issue, as discussed by Lerner (1975) involves writing "contribution" history, which critically examines how historical narratives constructed by men have prescribed women's roles and defined societal expectations of womanhood. Another fundamental challenge lies in the tendency of historians of women's history to rely on traditional conceptual frameworks rooted in male-dominated perspectives. This approach addresses women primarily within a male-defined societal context, attempting to interpret their experiences through categories and value systems that position men as the primary standard of significance. Lerner (1975) proposed articulating this problem by developing a "transitional history" of women, which would incorporate new categories of analysis, such as, reproduction, the relationship between childbearing and childrearing, sexual myths, and women's consciousness, that challenge and move beyond patriarchal assumptions traditionally embedded in historical narratives.

At present, the stigmatization of women in politics is systemically employed as a means to discredit their actions and influence public opinion, particularly during electoral campaigns. Female politicians are frequently characterized in media as possessing "a firm grip", being "masculine women", or "women endowed with masculine traits", as illustrated by the portrayal of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, often labeled the "Iron Lady". Similarly, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel faced criticism during the 2005 election campaign for being deficient in family life due to her childlessness (Ferree, 2006). Such stigmatization extends beyond political office to women seeking to serve in the armed forces, where gender stereotypes similarly undermine their legitimacy and agency. In this case, society equals "soldering" and "masculinity" and reminds women that they should stay as "Beautiful Souls" who help soldiers and not become military men (Brown, 2019). Women, whether in political or military roles, are less likely to gain widespread public recognition or support, as they are predominantly associated with ideas of pacifism, peace and family prosperity.

The mass media play a significant role in perpetuating criticism of female politicians. Frequently lacking editorial independence and instead reflecting the interests of financially supportive candidates, media outlets often portray women in politics through a negative lens. This

persistent negative framing contributes to structural barriers that hinder women's full participation in political life (Quevedo, Berrocal, 2018). Another significant issue is the underrepresentation of female politicians in the "hard news" media outlets, referring to politics and economics (Padovani, Belluati, Karadimitriou, Horz-Ishak, Baroni, 2022). Within this limited visibility, women are frequently subjected to stereotypical labeling. As Kanter (2008) identified, there are four principal types of such labels: the seductress, the mother, the mascot and the iron maiden. Another classification proposed by García Beaudoux (2018) shows four main historically constructed stereotypes of women in politics: the association of female politicians with motherhood and domestic roles; the portrayal of successful women candidates in relation to influential male figures; the depiction of women politicians as overly emotional and lacking self-regulation or emotional intelligence; and the emphasis on the appearance and personal style of women in political life. The spread of gender stereotypes in the media also contributes to the escalation of misogyny among women. Due to certain media representations, female voters often show distrust towards female politicians, instead favoring male political actors, whom they perceive as "strong" and "better equipped" to comprehensively respond to complex political challenges in both domestic and foreign affairs, particularly in matters of security.

Thus, the influence of gender stereotypes in politics is evident in the United States, where, for example, in 1999 women constituted only 14,6% of employees in the Department of Defense, and fewer than 5% held senior positions related to security (Tickner, 2001). Therefore, prior to the September 11 terrorist attack, women largely remained excluded from key positions in American political institutions due to the societal stigma imposed on female politicians. Women's perspectives on foreign policy were marginalized, which in turn prompted growing interest in the issue among feminist scholars.

Chapter 2. Analysis of the events of September 11, 2001 through the prism of a feminist theory

2.1 A feminist approach to defining security issues and international relations

Following the collapse of the bipolar international system and the subsequent decline in the centrality of the nuclear arms race within national security studies, new approaches to global security began to emerge, broadening the international relations agenda. Among these was the feminist perspective on world politics, through which female scholars critically examined their historical exclusion from the development of international relations theories. Meanwhile, the study of international relations was no longer confined to the analysis of inter-state politics, as traditionally emphasized by the realist approach. International politics came to be understood as encompassing interactions among international organizations, social movements, transnational corporations, and non-governmental economic entities. As women had historically been marginalized in recorded history, this broader conception of global political actors enabled the development of a distinctly feminist framework within the discipline (Tickner, 2001).

The emergence of the feminist approach to the study of international relations occurred in the 1980s during the Third Debate in the field, a period shaped by the rise of critical theory and postmodernism, which challenged the epistemological and ontological foundations of existing paradigms. Therefore, feminist scholars of international relations thus proposed an alternative framework for understanding international politics, one that does not conform to the conventional epistemologies of realism, liberalism, neorealism and neoliberalism. Influenced by postmodernism, feminist scholars sought to challenge the claimed universality of traditional paradigms, arguing that these frameworks had been formulated within a gender-biased discourse.

In the international relations discipline, there is no unique feminist approach to study world politics. Moreover, one of the core limitations of the feminist scholarship in this field lies in the polarization of ideas and concepts, which often divide its adherence. For this reason, L. Sjoberg (2013) suggested that scholars should speak of feminism approaches in *plural*, reflecting a diversity of perspectives that nonetheless share a *common commitment* to advancing debates on gender emancipation. Despite their differences, these approaches are united by a central concern with the structural causes of women's subordination and the unequal distribution of social, economic, and political opportunities between men and women. Each strand of feminist international relations theory highlights distinct issues pertaining to women's experiences and roles in the global politics, economy and military actions. To illustrate the diversity, *the realist perspective* of feminism analyzes the role of gender in power politics between states. *Liberal approach* is focused on developing the epistemological concepts to explain the causes of female subordination in international politics. *Critical approach* examines the ideas of gendered identity

and power, while *constructivism* is studying the way gender lens is shaping global politics. *Poststructuralist* feminist scholars analyze how languages, shaped by gender dichotomies, such as rational/strong and emotional/weak, reinforces structural inequalities. Finally, *postcolonial feminists* emphasize the enduring impact of the colonial legacy of gendered oppression and associated practices on the continued subordination of women.

Whereas traditional security studies have typically adopted a state-centered approach, feminist analysis emphasizes how insecurity in world politics disproportionately affects individuals, particularly those from marginalized populations. Feminist scholars have also raised critical concerns about the concept of militarized masculinities, which is especially prevalent in the realist approach and is seen as contributing to heightened military tensions and the expansion of armed forces. *Militarized masculinity* is understood as a social construct within the military sphere that prescribes men to embody aggression, toughness and self-sacrifice to the motherland, thereby legitimizing violence and the use of military power sanctioned by the state (Goldstein, 2001). The ideology of militarism reinforces the significance of the military and power concepts within the society. According to Enloe (2007), militarism is “a complex package of ideas, that, together, foster military values in both military and civilian affairs which justifies military priorities and military influences in culture, economic, and political affairs”. According to the feminist's security studies perspective, militarization is characterized as “a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being militaristic ideas” (Enloe, 2000). In this regard, militarism is distorting the reality between war and peace, military and civilian, since the military component becomes normalized and gradually integrated within the society (Sjoberg, Via, 2010).

The ideology of militarism is bonded with the ideology of war. Once militarism is starting to dominate in the society, it subconsciously recruits the population in war preparation and mobilization (Cockburn, 2014), thereby legitimizing the inevitability of the armed conflict.

The feminist framework also seeks to analyze what occurs during armed conflicts and how their outcomes affect populations, with particular attention to the ways in which military conflicts impact women. In doing so, the feminist approach applies an individual-level analysis (Sjoberg, 2013), in contrast to traditional paradigms of international politics, which tend to focus on structural explanations of military conflicts and prioritize the relations between state actors in an uncertain international system. Moreover, the feminist approach, shaped in part by the influence of political economy examines how unequal gender structures constrain not only women but also certain groups of men, while seeking to identify pathways for dismantling hierarchical social relations.

Therefore, feminist scholars suggest applying the *gender lens* in the study of international relations, thereby enabling a critical distinction between the roles, behaviors, and experiences of

men and women in global politics (Sjoberg, 2013). Historically, women have been underrepresented in security institutions both because of the entrenched dichotomous distinction between men and women and due to the persistent stigma, that associates the military and political spheres exclusively with men. Consequently, the contributions of feminist scholars to security studies are fundamentally different from those of established paradigms, particularly the realist tradition.

According to realist tradition, international relations are characterized by an anarchical world order in which states are the primary actors. National interests therefore play a decisive role in shaping state behavior, and power must be exercised to ensure survival in a hostile international environment. For classical realists such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Thucydides, moral principles are considered secondary to the imperatives of security and state survival, leading them to advise state leaders to set aside ethical considerations when confronting existential threats. Realists are generally skeptical of international treaties as mechanisms for maintaining global security. Given their characterization of the international system as inherently anarchic, they argue that the possibility of war is ever-present and that states must ultimately depend on their own military capabilities for survival. Hans J. Morgenthau (1948), characterized “international politics, like all politics, as a struggle for power”. Therefore, they associate international security with the military capability of the state and its self-defense potential. This perspective gives rise to the “*security dilemma*” wherein two states, each pursuing its own national interests, inadvertently generate a cycle of escalating military rivalry. However, in practice, during the bipolar world order of the Cold War era, the presence of nuclear weapons combined with effective strategies of nuclear deterrence contributed to greater stability in the international security system due to the maintaining the balance of power compared to the present day, when frozen conflicts have increasingly reignited (Tickner, 2001). It is important to recognize that the security studies were shaped during the Cold War period which was predominantly defined in the militarized realist paradigm. Accordingly, prior to the Third Debate, security studies centered on the military capabilities of the state, reflecting a narrow, state-centric understanding of security.

This limited understanding of security studies started to be revised in the 1980s. One of the key ideas, which were proposed by another realist, Barry Buzan (1983), lay in defining security in broader terms, including the political, economic, societal, and environmental aspects together with a military one. Buzan (1983) challenges the traditional realist idea by arguing that states are not the pillars of security; instead, they can themselves become a significant resource of threat. Feminist security studies emerged in the same framework of broadening the concept of security. The feminist approach to security studies adopts a multidimensional and multilevel framework of analysis, focusing on individuals and groups affected by various forms of violence rather than limiting the scope exclusively to states (Tickner, 2001). The key distinction between the feminist

scholarship and other critical security studies lies in its application of a *gendered lens*, which enables an analysis of how existing gender hierarchies shape the experiences of individuals and groups. Feminist scholars argue that employing a gendered lens of analysis makes it possible to uncover the causes of military conflicts that have been ignored by traditionalist approaches. This approach enables analysis at multiple levels of how various forms of violence and existing gender hierarchies contribute to global insecurity.

One of the central concerns of feminist scholars relates to the role of women in armed conflicts. Feminists thus conclude that international security is predominantly framed through a masculine lens, which constrains women's agency in addressing critical security issues. Within this gendered framework, women are frequently portrayed as peaceful casualties, in contrast to the depiction of men as heroic and active agents, thereby reinforcing binary gender relations. Feminist scholars pointed out that this idea resulted in overlooking women's participation in military institutions and combat roles. Therefore, at the core of this scholarship lies the idea that *gender* is the socially constructed phenomena rather than biologically determined, meaning that the relationship between military potential and men is perceived as a normative standard (Elstain, 2011). Thus, *gender performativity* (Butler, 1988) is embedded in society, where men are socialized to perform resiliently, belligerent and aggressive. It allows to maintain the traditionalist narrative during the militarized conflicts that men are perceived as "warriors", while women are "Beautiful Souls" (Elstain, 2011).

Feminist scholars are convinced that the construction of gender roles, reinforced by the mobilizing influence of militarized masculinity, positions men as dominant actors in politics and security studies. This framework, not only privileges men, who are typically represented as soldiers and protectors, but also marginalized women by casting them primarily as passive victims or self-sacrificing mothers during military conflicts. Feminist scholars started to challenge this perspective by providing the example of the women's agency during the first Chechen War (1994-1996) where Russian mothers unified their efforts to protest against mobilization of their sons to the war (Eichler, 2014). Their actions contributed significantly to widespread desertion and a decline in morale within the Russian army, despite the prevailing societal valorization of compulsory military service. In 1988, during the USSR's participation in the Afghan War, the mothers of conscripted soldiers established the Union of the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia. Members of this organization actively worked to bring back mobilized soldiers, thereby exposing the fragility of a deeply rooted ideal of the "savior of the motherland" and contributing to the erosion of militaristic sentiments among the troops. As the result, the deconstruction of militarized masculinity contributes to the mitigation of armed conflict and it reduces the number of individuals willing to voluntarily participate in war in Afghanistan and Chechnya by

challenging existing gender norms, and in some cases, even motivates former soldiers to engage in peacebuilding efforts.

Feminists also drew their attention on perception of women as victims of the conflict. It creates the situation of the unequal power balance between men and women. The idea of men as a source of military protection heightens their position within the society compared to women. In most cases, men are celebrated as war heroes, and through their elevated status in gender discourse, they amplify male representation and dominance in the public sphere. Moreover, the state reinforces gender hierarchies by offering institutional privileges to men who serve in the military, thereby affirming their higher social status. Through the system of benefits, such as the GI Bill in the United States, which grants tuition-free education, higher wages, and preferential treatment in medical institutions, the state not only incentivizes military service, but also constructs a hierarchical value system in which military participation, predominantly male, is connected with greater social respect and civil entitlement. The notion of protection functions as a compelling justification for military recruitment and serves as a tool of legitimization of military interventions abroad. Meanwhile, women have been often relegated to subordinate roles during the war conflict that position them in service to male soldiers commonly as nurses, wives, or problematically, as objects of sexual exploitation, including through prostitution or as victims of wartime sexual violence.

Feminist scholarship proposes several methods for the preservation of global security. First, it emphasizes the importance of demilitarization of masculinities together with the military support of femininities (Enloe, 2000). This involves a critical reassessment of militarized narratives such as “Motherland is in danger”, the portrayal of women as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection, and the idealization of patriotic motherhood. Secondly, it is necessary to challenge the idea of masculinity itself and propose an alternative form which will allow to reduce gender hierarchies. Second, feminist scholars advocate for a fundamental challenge to conventional notions of masculinity, promoting alternative masculinity that do not rely on dominance, aggression, or hierarchy. Finally, they call for a reevaluation of military privileges and incentives, which contribute to the reinforcement of gendered hierarchies by placing men and women on unequal social and political footing.

One of the contested topics among feminist scholars concerns the participation of women as combatants. From one perspective, the inclusion of women in military roles challenges traditional gender norms and expands the construct of the “hero”, thereby, contributing to the deconstruction of hierarchical gender structures within the security domain. From another point of view, women’s employment in armed forces reinforces a militarized system inherently shaped by patriarchal values, and thus contends that women should not participate in wars of institutions dominated by men.

Feminist approaches in International Relations have often been criticized by conservative scholars, who question women's capacity to participate both in politics and in the military, often invoking biologically determinist arguments. Francis Fukuyama (1998), for instance, postulated that increased female political leadership would change global affairs in a direction counter to the tendencies of postindustrial and Western societies. Asserting that women are biologically predisposed toward peaceful behavior, Fukuyama (1998) predicted a growing female presence in politics would lead to a more "peaceful" world order. However, he simultaneously contended that such leadership would be ill-equipped to confront authoritarian figures like Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and Mobutu Sese Seko, due to women's presumed lack of necessary aggression. Drawing on evolutionary psychology and primate behavior, he further argued against women's participation in combat roles, claiming their presence undermines military cohesion, which he believed is founded on male fellowship.

Feminist scholars have responded critically to Fukuyama's arguments, emphasizing that feminist approaches to security are not rooted in the debates over biological aggression, but rather seek to broaden the scope of security studies itself (Tickner, 1999; Wibben, 2004). Rather than reinforcing a binary competition over which gender is more aggressive, feminist scholarship focuses on the structural and gendered dimensions of war, particularly the often-overlooked issues such as violation of women's rights during armed conflict, the prevalence of military prostitution, the precarious legal status of female refugees, and the widespread use of sexualized violence as a weapon of war. As Tickner (1999) argues, Fukuyama's framing dissociates from meaningful analysis by reducing the discussion to essentialistic assumptions, instead of focusing on the root of causes of war and the development of preventive strategies.

This broader feminist conceptualization of security, which prioritizes the individual level of analysis of the war conflicts, provides a critical lens through which to evaluate state-led security policies. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack, these feminist critiques became particularly relevant, as U.S. foreign policy increasingly invoked the language of protection, democracy and liberation to justify military interventions. The following part applies this feminist framework to critically assess George W. Bush's foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq, examining how gendered narratives were mobilized to legitimize war and what consequences these narratives had for women both abroad and within the United States.

2.2 Feminists' criticism of George W. Bush's foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq

The protection myth serves as a powerful instrument for bringing back militarized masculinity into fashion with the rise of religious terrorism. One of the key examples can be found in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, carried out by Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization al-Qaeda. In response, then-U.S. President

George W. Bush launched “War on Terror”, initiating military interventions in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Among the justifications for these military operations was the urgent need to protect local women, illustrating how gendered narratives are mobilized to legitimize military actions (Eichler, 2013).

The protector/protected dichotomy extends beyond gendered relations and can be observed at the level of state/citizen dynamic. As Young (2003) argues, political leaders often assume the role of protectors, while citizens are positioned as the protected, thereby replicating hierarchical structures similar to those that traditionally subordinate women. In this regard, the state is considered as a guarantor of security and is glorified for its protective functions. Accordingly, feminist scholars found out that the democratic state, those upholding core principles of democracy such as systems of checks and balances, free and fair election, and civil freedoms, start experiencing democratic backsliding when they act from the protector role in the international arena (Tickner, 2001).

Subsequently, the U.S. President George W. Bush employed the *securitization tool* in order to plunge into the sensation of fear the U.S. citizens, thereby legitimizing the implementation of restrictive measures, including censorship, and justifying military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Young, 2003). Securitization is a theory developed by Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan and Jaap de Wilde (1998), which posits a threat is not inherent but constructed through the discursive act of labeling a threat as a matter of security. Once the threat is securitized, it legitimates the use of military force against the unpredictable aggressor. Moreover, within this security framework, citizens are often discouraged from questioning the means by which protection is provided, as expressions of dissent are frequently framed as unpatriotic and disloyal. Such mechanisms of the “unquestioning approval” can invoke the regime transition from democratic toward authoritarian one, justified by the pursuit of stabilizing the security situation.

In military conflicts the concept of patriotism is a crucial variable in shaping national identity, simultaneously portraying the state as both protector and victim. This form of patriotic mobilization is not the invention of modern times. In ancient Sparta, patriots were understood as “citizens who love their country simply because it is their country” (Berns, 2001). Today, a similar, uncritical understanding of patriotism continues to prevail, often overlooking its complex and multifaceted nature. In the security studies framework, the invocation of the patriotic goal to protect its own country overseas, opens the door for implementing the “military masculinity” concept in action. It empowers the political leader to believe that his course of actions is completely right, while simultaneously fostering a societal tendency toward unquestioning acceptance of such decisions. One of the examples is the enactment of the USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) in October 2001, which was aimed at expanding the government

surveillance over both citizens and foreigners. It also streamlined procedures for the detention and prosecution of individuals accused of terrorism-related offenses, raising concerns about civil freedoms and due process. As a result, the law was implemented in practice, leading to the detention and imprisonment of individuals without prior trial proceedings. Meanwhile, public approval of President Bush's Administration reached 90%, recording the highest approval rating ever for the U.S. Presidents.

Both feminist and IR scholarship, analyzing Bush's post-9/11 course of actions, came up to the conclusion that the political system became dictatorship and authoritarian, where civil rights of both its citizens and immigrants became limited for the sake of security (Young, 2003; Ferguson, 2007). In the face of a perceived existential threat, American citizens, deprived of the protective guarantees traditionally associated with citizenship rights, were unable to critically question the legitimacy of government actions. Instead, their reasoning shifted toward a logic of obedience encapsulated by the belief: "If I am not doing anything wrong, I am protected" (Young, 2003). The situation was further intensified by media coverage, which continuously emphasized the threat of terrorism, thereby amplifying public fear and gratitude towards those who are perceived as protectors.

Operation "Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan

The same logic applied to the international response of the United States to the September 11 terrorist attack. Bush's Administration initiated the military operation "Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan a few days after the terrorist attack against Al-Qaeda and Taliban as its sponsor, claiming that American security starts abroad. Feminist scholars suggest that President Bush's declaration of the "War on Terror" initiated a cascading effect in the international system, contributing to the normalization of preemptive military action as a legitimate means of securing national interests (Young, 2003; Tickner, 2002). This action subsequently influenced the outbreak of military operations between India and Pakistan in 2002, as well as the launch of Israel's anti-terrorist campaign "Operation Defensive Shield" in the West Bank in 2002. Thus, this normalization of preemptive military action had "paradoxically" contributed to increased instability in global security dynamics.

In the official address announcing the initiation of the military operation in Afghanistan, George W. Bush appealed to the notion of "patience" as a civic virtue necessary for combating international terrorism. He employed the allegory of "patience as our strength", encouraging the U.S. citizens to endure the anticipated challenges of the "War on Terror: in pursuit of national security objectives. It is noteworthy that since the 1980s, the U.S. party system has acquired a more pronounced gender dimension, with the Republican Party often associated with the metaphor of the "strict father" and the Democratic Party with that of the "caring mother" (Lakoff, 2002).

Therefore, Bush's rhetoric reinforced the republican concept of protective masculinity, wherein citizens, particularly women, are positioned as passive objects of security, while the state and its male defenders assume the active role of protectors. In the same speech, Bush referenced a letter from a young girl expressing her willingness to see her father serving in the army to contribute to the greater goal of national stability. This serves as a powerful illustration of the gendered dynamic at play, where men are active agents of peace and security and women are passive supporters, sacrificial figures upholding the moral legitimacy of the militarized state action. Another key element of the U.S.-led campaign against terrorism was the discourse framing of military intervention as a humanitarian endeavor. President George W. Bush characterized the campaign as a "generous" effort to protect "suffering" Afghan citizens from the "murderous and outlaw" regime (George W. Bush speech, October 7, 2001), effectively relabeling the war as a humanitarian action.

Within the framework of humanitarian intervention, the President's Administration shifted its focus towards the protection of women's rights in Afghanistan. In November 2001, First Lady Laura Bush addressed a radio speech regarding women's rights in Afghanistan and expressing the concern of the American public over their treatment under the Taliban regime. Later on, the U.S. Congress passed the Afghan Women and Children Relief Act of 2001, which formally reaffirmed its deep concerns about women's and children rights under the Taliban regime and provided for humanitarian assistance aimed at improving the conditions of women and children in Afghanistan (Afghan Women and Children Relief Act of 2001, 2001).

Women's rights in Afghanistan began to face significant challenges following the withdrawal of the Soviet army in 1988 and the rise to power of religious fundamentalist groups in 1989. These groups implemented repressive policies that included threats of mass violence against women associated with humanitarian organizations, those who sought employment, and eventually even those who appeared in public spaces. In 1996, the Taliban came to power initially pledging to restore the Islamic government that would also safeguard women's rights. Gradually, the regime systematically limited women's rights and freedoms. This included prohibition on education, presence in public, employment and access to healthcare for women. Furthermore, under the Taliban's interpretation of religion, even the act of men seeing women in public was deemed sinful.

In these conditions, Bush's government strategy on liberating women and children looked reasonable and effective to implement the concept of the masculinist protector (Scott, 2008). Feminists scholars have claimed that, prior to the 9/11 terrorist attack, American feminists had already attempted to raise awareness about the severe restrictions imposed on Afghan women's freedoms, calling for political sanctions against the Taliban regime. However, both the Clinton and early Bush administrations largely disregarded these appeals. In this context, the sudden

emphasis on protecting Afghan women's rights has been critically examined by feminist scholars (Tickner, 2001; Åse, 2019; Young, 2003; Berry, 2003). For instance, Young (2003) argued that invoking women's rights functioned as a rhetorical strategy to secure broader public support for U.S. military intervention. This idea was also supported by Berry (2003), therefore, omitting both the historical context of the Taliban's emergence, shaped in part by American involvement in Afghanistan during the Cold War, and the disregard for human rights and gender discrimination in that period, the sudden shift toward prioritizing women's rights causes an ambiguous assessment. Berry (2003) further argues that had women's rights and democracy truly been central to the U.S. foreign policy, the strategies pursued would have differed markedly, extending back to the era of Cold War confrontation, by addressing issues such as mass rape and forced marriage in Afghanistan and by preventing the Taliban from gaining authority in the country's political life.

As the result of the "Enduring Freedom" operation, the number of civilian casualties grew dramatically, often due to the misdirected bombings or civilians' unawareness of their proximity to military targets (Benini, Moulton, 2004). This escalation disproportionately affected women and children, exposing them to heightened risks of insecurity, displacement, and poverty, especially as humanitarian aid infrastructures were destroyed and the refugee crisis intensified. Consequently, the claim that the operation successfully liberated and protected Afghan women appeared highly problematic and difficult to justify (Berry, 2003).

It is important to recognize that both the Taliban and the United States invoked women's issues, albeit in opposing senses. For the Taliban, emancipated women were the symbols of a morally lax society that needed to be disciplined and brought into alignment with their vision of religious and political order following decades of perceived chaos. Religious fundamentalists also developed the concept of *Occidentalism*, as a counterpoint to Orientalism, arguing that Western women are likewise oppressed, but in different forms, by societies they characterize as lacking moral integrity. Occidentalism is considered as one of the more radical forms of ideological anti-Americanism, which began to take shape globally in the mid-1960s, particularly in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. According to the Occidentalism interpretations, Western civilization is imposing barbaric values, which must be destroyed through physical aggression against people living in these societies (Katzenstein, Keohane, 2007). This perspective highlights issues such as sexual harassment, rape, and femicide as evidence of the moral and social decay in the West. More specifically, the United States is framed as the main representative of this decay and most radical occidentalists consequently call for the dismantling of U.S. political influence. In contrast, the United States employed the image of Afghan women as a rhetorical device to justify and legitimize the "War on Terror", framing their protection as a central objective of the military intervention.

Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq

The U.S.-led invasion in Iraq in 2003 was framed as part of the broader global “War on Terror” strategy. By this point, the Bush Administration had consolidated its self-image as a force of “liberators” and “protectors”, a narrative further reinforced by the operation’s title, “Operation Iraqi Freedom”. The gendered dimension of this protector role was also evident in the international coalition formed for the intervention, which included the United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland and Kurdish groups, which highlighted the symbolic and strategic functioning of militarized masculinity in legitimizing the use of force under the guise of humanitarian liberation.

However, in the case of the invasion of Iraq, the gendered narrative slightly shifted from one of humanitarian protection of women to a more overtly securitized framing centered on the fight against the so-called “axis of evil”. Nonetheless, the actions of the allied forces in Iraq continued to reflect the underlying gender power structure, particularly in the ways Iraqi women were portrayed, engaged with, and impacted during the invasion. The U.S. administration portrayed Iraq as a fundamental threat to global peace, primarily through the allegation that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was developing and potentially deploying weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, the invasion of Iraq was framed as a mission to promote democracy and liberate the Iraqi population from the Baa’th regime. During an official meeting with Iraqi Women Leaders in November 2003, the U.S. President referred to them as “brave and courageous women” (President Bush Meets with Iraqi Women Leaders, November, 2003), reinforcing the narrative of the U.S. as a liberating force and as a “protector”. At the same time, the Bush Administration claimed that “Iraqi women need the democratic liberation”, therefore articulating the masculinist protector narrative that underpinned the rationale for invasion in Iraq. As a result, feminist scholars pointed out that Iraqi women were symbolically positioned both as vulnerable victims in need of rescue and as heroic figures aligned with the democratic mission (Al-Ali, Pratt, 2006).

The actual impact of the so-called “liberation” of Iraqi women contradicted the stated goals of the intervention. While women previously had access to education and employment, the ensuing political instability and heightened security threats significantly restricted these opportunities, particularly access to education. According to reports by Amnesty International, the U.S.-led invasion in Iraq resulted in widespread human rights violations, including mass killings and systematic torture of Iraqi civilians. Moreover, detained civilians were subjected to severe abuse, including rape, sleep and food deprivation, and forced nudity (Amnesty International, 2023). Similarly, Human Rights Watch criticized the Bush Administration for its disregard of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, arguing that the treatment of detainees violated fundamental international legal standards (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The Human Rights Watch drew parallels between

the abuses at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and those at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, framing them as manifestations of a broader strategy of extrajudicial detention (Human Rights Watch, 2004). The Bush Administration justified these actions as part of a new approach to combating asymmetric threats, further reinforcing the controversial nature of the so-called “protective measures”.

Therefore, the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which initially framed women as victims of a dictatorial regime in need of liberation, ultimately contributed to the marginalization of women as political agents. The following military actions undermined their rights to stability, security, education, healthcare and employment (Al-Ali, Pratt, 2006), and, furthermore, it limited their participation in public to express their concerns.

The political instability following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, compounded by the rise of radical factions, also invoked the narrative of “women’s moral protection” as a justification for consolidating power, paralleling similar patterns observed in Afghanistan after the operation of “Enduring Freedom”. Islamic fundamentalist groups implemented regulations similar to those imposed by Taliban in Afghanistan, including the forced and mandatory head coverings and restrictions on women’s mobility in public spaces, all under the pretext of safeguarding their security.

In subsequent speeches, reflecting “militarized masculinity” discourse both First Lady Laura Bush and President George W. Bush emphasized the results of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and its influence on women’s rights, stating that “Iraqi women are free from rape and torture” due the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein (President, Mrs. Bush Mark Progress in Global Women’s Human Rights, 2004). They further asserted that both Iraq and Afghanistan had embraced democratic freedoms and portrayed the United States as a reformist power committed to democratic transformation. By framing the U.S. as a “defender” and “protector” against oppressive regimes such as the Taliban and Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist government, the Bush administration justified a continued military presence in both countries as a means to support ongoing democratic reforms, seeing it as America’s “highest mission”. However, the actual outcomes of these interventions, particularly in terms of improving the conditions of women, remain highly contested.

The U.S.-led efforts to promote of democratic citizenship in the countries of Afghanistan and Iraq have been widely criticized by feminist scholars. They claim that the idea of the state acting as a global protector of security and democracy is inherently utopian, as the idea of absolute safety is unattainable. According to this perspective, leaders who claim to pursue universal security through militarized masculinity should be approached with skepticism. In a world characterized by unpredictable risks, it is more productive to focus on minimizing the consequences of threats rather than endorsing aggressive strategies aimed at achieving an illusory form of universal security (Young, 2003). And in this regard, the unequal power-relation dichotomy of men as

protectors and women as protected should be rejected in the democratic states. The figure of the protector continues to act in the name of the citizens, allegedly upholding the principle of equal citizenship between himself and those he claims to protect.

While feminist scholars have widely critiqued the patriarchal logic of militarized foreign policy, especially the construction of women as passive beneficiaries of male protection, this binary is complicated by growing presence of women in the military, particularly in the context of the U.S.-led War on Terror. The post-9/11 era witnessed a significant shift in the visibility and roles of American women in the armed forces, with some actively participating in combat and detention units. This development raises critical questions about how female military agency fits within, resists, or reinforces the existing gendered structures of war and security. The next section explores the emergence of militarized femininity and the ways in which women's participation in the "War on Terror" both challenged and reconfigured traditional notions of gender, power, and political agency.

2.3 Problematization of women's military gender roles during the "War on Terror"

Historical background on the participation of women in armed conflicts

In the hierarchical relations of militarized masculinity, women are typically assigned submissive and subordinate roles. During armed conflicts, gender relations tend to reinforce a dominant masculine model in which women are expected to fulfill roles such as widows, mothers, daughters, caregivers, nurses, or victims. Within this patriarchal logic, the prospect of women asserting agency as defenders possess a perceived threat to the established gender hierarchy, as the military has historically been associated with manhood. Consequently, in the majority of states, only men are subject to the obligatory military conscription. An exception is the State of Israel, where all citizens must serve in the army upon reaching the age of 18 (Brown, 2019). However, despite recent reforms enabling women to serve in combat roles and granting them formal equality within the Israeli Defense Forces, a gendered disparity remains: women are required to serve for 24 months, compared to 36 months for men (Israel's Declaration of Independence, 1948).

From a historical perspective, women have always participated in wars often as combatants, yet their presence was highly visible, but when the war was over women's agency in politics tended to disappear. One of the earliest recorded examples of women's participation in the army can be found in the Dahomey Kingdom in the 18th century. Though their army was relatively small, historical evidence indicates that both male and female warriors were regarded as equally brave, even though women were typically excluded from direct combat roles (Goldstein, 2001). However, Dahomey female warriors adopted masculinized identities and uniforms, performing gender in ways traditionally associated with men. These women were considered the property of

the king, they could not marry someone else apart from him but yet played a crucial role in military organization, particularly in guarding against natural cataclysm. Women participated in the 1890-1892 war against France which serves as a clear example of women's agency in warfare, challenging conventional assumptions about gender roles in history.

Another key example of women's participation in war were female soldiers during World War II. The Soviet Union was not prepared for the outbreak of war with Nazi Germany, and, therefore, there was a huge shortage of human resources in the Red Army. The mobilization of women to the front started gradually. By 1942, due to a critical loss of male soldiers, women were formally integrated into combat roles, particularly in signal corps and in the air defense units. According to official data from the USSR Ministry of Defense, approximately 400,000 Soviet women served in the military and an additional 200,000 participated in the guerrilla movement. However, this extensive involvement in warfare did not challenge gender roles dramatically. Following the war, the dominant gender narrative reverted to traditional norms, and women were encouraged to return to domestic roles, particularly as mothers, to address the post-war demographic crisis. Moreover, of the approximately 11,000 individuals awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union during World War II, only 90 of them were women. This gender disparity highlights the marginalization of women's contributions to the war effort within Soviet recognition. In both the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, female participation in warfare has often been portrayed as unnatural or anomalous. This perception was reinforced through post-war cultural narratives, particularly in Soviet literature. Canonical works such as "Tomorrow Was the War", "The Young Guard", and the "The Dawns Here Are Quite" constructed a gender discourse that emphasized the incongruity of war and femininity, ultimately promoting the idea that "war does not have a woman's face". Such representations contributed to the erasure of women's military agency and reinforced the traditional gender roles in the post-war sociopolitical order.

In the current context, women's participation in the military is still often perceived as a deviation from traditional gender norms, which associate combat and defense with masculinity. However, when women do gain access to military institutions, the state often constructs their image through a hyper-feminized and glamorized lens, portraying them as soldiers who conform to the conventional beauty standards, such as wearing makeup and high heels, while simultaneously limiting their roles by excluding them from active combat positions (Enloe, 2000). Besides, frequently, when women participate in military operations, media coverage emphasizes their marital and marital status, focusing on whether they have children and how those children cope in their absence, rather than acknowledging their direct contributions to combat operations (Dowler, 2002). The concept of women in the army is called "militarized femininity" which stands for militarism which keeps the control of women.

The American Army, prior to the 9/11 terrorist attack, largely integrated women into the military units, marking a gradual but significant transformation in traditional gender norms within national defense institutions. For the first time women were integrated into the U.S. army as combatants during the Gulf War, symbolizing a broader reconfiguration of gender roles in the military sphere. This mass incorporation of women into the U.S. armed forces began in the 1970s, in parallel with the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. By 1999, approximately 14 percent of women were recruited as military personnel (Goldstein, 2001), a figure that reflects both the professionalization of the military and the increasing societal prestige associated with military service. This pre-9/11 trajectory laid the groundwork for the evolving roles of women in a new security landscape.

Women's participation in the U.S.-led military interventions in the post-9/11

However, a particular notable manifestation of women's agency emerged in the post-9/11 era, with their increased involvement in military conflicts. In this regard, in the aftermath of 9/11, military engagement in the armed forces during this period is especially relevant. In this context, the military can be viewed not only as a defense area but also as an extension of the political sphere, one in which women's visibility and roles have both expanded and contested.

The U.S.-led invasion in Iraq in 2003 has a particular significance within this framework. During the operation "Enduring Freedom", American female soldiers discovered a range of roles previously reserved by men. These included experiences such as becoming prisoners of war, engaging in acts of violence, including those directed at enemy prisoners of war, and serving in combat roles. These developments marked an extraordinary expansion of the behavioral repertoire available to women as both political and military actors. Therefore, the "War on Terror" landscape not only redefined the boundaries of women's participation in armed conflicts, but also challenged the existing gender hierarchies between men and women in politics.

One of the notable women's expanded roles in the U.S. military during the post-9/11 period is the case of Colonel Janis Karpinski. Having gained her initial military experience during the Gulf War, Karpinski held the highest-ranking position among deployed female personnel at the time of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. She was first appointed as a combat commander and later on she assumed the responsibility of the Abu Ghraib military prison. In 2004, shocking photographs were released by one of the American broadcasting agencies revealing the systematic torture and sexual violence of Iraqi detainees of the Abu Ghraib prison. Those acts were directly perpetrated with the direct involvement of the U.S. Army personnel. The images provoked widespread condemnation both domestically and internationally, severely damaging the credibility of the American army and the legitimacy of the Bush Administration's security politics. While some American public

justified the sexual abuse as the prescribed fate for those who had attacked the U.S. on the September 11; the international community strongly denounced the violations, invoking the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and expressing alarm at the extent of dehumanization exercised (Amnesty International, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2004) by a democratic and liberating state.

In the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib scandal, Colonel Janis Karpinski received a massive conviction of her command for alleged mismanagement of the military prison in 2003. In connection to these events, the public and political entities questioned the women's competence in military leadership, due to the fact that women cannot assume responsibility for committing war crimes in Abu Ghraib. Karpinski herself, however, maintained public speeches and she wrote in her memoir that she was made a scapegoat for systemic failures within the military hierarchy (Wheeler, 2004). Colonel Karpinski argued that she had no knowledge of the torture practices carried out by personnel under her nominal command and that public officials sought to deflect blame by targeting her as a convenient figure of brutal women (Karpinski, 2004).

While sexualized violence as a tactic of warfare is not unique to the post 1990s context, it gained heightened visibility during the Vietnam War and the Bosnian War (Kirby, 2019), where it was used systematically as a means of domination and humiliation. Feminist scholars argue that sexualized violence operates not only as a tool of physical subordination but also as a symbolic strategy aimed at asserting control over communities through gendered humiliation (Goldstein, 2001). In the context of Iraq, where patriarchal and religious norms place significant emphasis on notions of honor, rape and sexual violence carry profound cultural effects. Within this framework, masculinity is tied to the authority, control and the protection of women. Therefore, when American female soldiers engaged in or facilitated acts of sexualized violence against Iraqi male war prisoners, it not only violated international law but also created a particular form of humiliation. Feminist analysis highlights that such acts invert traditional gendered power hierarchies (Sjoberg, 2007). In this regard, if female weakness is a cultural assumption, then female-perpetrated violence signifies not only dominance but a profound symbolic assault on Iraqi masculinity itself.

Thereby, in the case of Iraq the involvement of military women, particularly those serving in the American military police at Abu Ghraib, significantly disrupts the traditional narrative of women as "Beautiful Souls", assisting them with ideas of peace, nurturing, comfort and support for male soldiers. These female soldiers challenged deeply rooted gender norms by embodying roles marked not only by pacifism and humanism, but by participation in acts of violence and torture, therefore, exposing the limited assumptions that equate femininity with moral superiority or nonviolence. In this regard, the post-9/11 military context has not only expanded the understanding of femininity, but also reshaped broader perceptions of women's political and military agency.

However, according to the feminist scholars, the image of militarized femininity exemplified by figures such as Janis Karpinski and her colleague Lyndie England are considered problematic and undesirable models of female combatants in the American army (Sjoberg, 2007). Both women became publicly associated with the Abu Ghraib prison scandal: Karpinski as the highest ranking officer overseeing the facility; and England as a junior soldier whose involvement in the sexual abuse and tortures led to her dishonorable discharge. These cases disrupted traditional narratives of female innocence and moral superiority in war, challenging dominant gender norms in ways that were met with discomfort and condemnation. In contrast, feminists argue that the U.S. military and media constructed Jessica Lynch as the “ideal” female soldier, who represented far more subordinated gendered discourse. Jessica Lynch was a supply specialist who was first attacked by the Iraqi side and later rescued, was portrayed not as an agent of violence but as a vulnerable victim whose rescue served to legitimize the U.S. Invasion of Iraq. As Sjøberg (2007) points out, Lynch’s captivity became a discursive tool to shift focus away from the humanitarian crisis in Iraq toward a narrative of American heroism and moral duty. Her militarized femininity, simultaneously illustrating service and vulnerability, reinforced traditional gender binaries, positioning her not as a full agent of war, but as someone still in need of protection and rescue. This framing, therefore, reaffirms the patriarchal notion of women as passive objects rather than autonomous military and political actors.

At the same time, the American media remained silent about other female soldiers who had committed the most serious war crimes against prisoners of war. Feminist lenses of analysis suggest that the selective visibility reflects a broader discomfort, both within the media and the Bush Administration, with representations of militarized femininity which does not suit the traditional gender expectations. Women who are aggressive, dominant and who are directly participating in violence are challenging the existing narrative of nurturing and caring women.

However, what is often overlooked in public discourse is the extent to which the American army relies on a language of sexual domination in internal communication, as well as the systemic practice of sexualizing soldiers with its ranks. This institutional culture compels women in the military to adapt to masculinized norms of behavior in order to gain legitimacy and authority. As a result, many female soldiers adopt a male-gazed gender performance, embracing aggression, toughness, and emotional neglect which are traditionally associated with successful military leadership. Within this framework, courage and competence are closely linked to the assimilation of masculine values. Feminist scholars argue that it is often women who conform to these norms most effectively who are able to conform in both the military and political landscape. From a feminist perspective, one possible interpretation of the events of Abu Ghraib is that they represent a case of hyper-assimilation, where female soldiers, under pressure to embody male military identity, engaged in behaviors that reflected the adaptation to militarized masculinity. It is not a

justification of their crimes, but rather a reason for a broad structural culture that values power and domination, thereby ignoring the alternative non-violent forms of agency of the leadership.

Thus, the narrative surrounding militarized femininity, as the example of Jessica Lynch, construct a deferential and constrained image of the female soldier, one that limits her autonomy and suppresses the expression of diverse characteristics that need not conform to possessive subordination. Despite the increased inclusion of women in the U.S. military, feminist scholars argue that the gender roles available to them remain narrowly defined. Women who do not agree to these roles are often forced either to adopt traditionally masculine traits or to exaggerate feminine ones in order to advance their military and political career.

The critical examination of women's roles in the U.S. military during the "War on Terror" reveals not only their increasing presence in militarized spaces but also the deeply gendered contradictions existing in these roles. While some women adapted to masculinized military norms, others were portrayed in the media as symbols of victimhood or justification for military action, reflecting the limited scope of acceptable nature of femininity and militarism in the post-9/11 context. Building on this analysis, the next chapter will elaborate how these representations contributed to a broader discursive shift that not only redefined women's agency in national security but also imposed the new symbolic boundaries of gender itself within militarized political framework.

Chapter 3. Women in politics after the 9/11 terrorist attack

3.1 Analysis of shifting of the gender discourse during the Global War on Terror

The gendered constructions evident in military institutions during the “War on Terror” did not remain connected to the battlefield, moreover they reinforced across political discourse, influencing leadership structures. The same binary logics that restricted female soldiers to either hyper-masculine or hyper-feminine roles were equal in the expectations placed on women in politics. In the post-9/11 security landscape, where militarized masculinity came back to vogue, women politicians were often seen as incompatible with political authority. This means that the militarized masculinity of the war front stepped onto the political sphere too, where women continued to face structural and symbolic barriers to leadership, particularly on high political posts and in the areas of national security.

In order to examine how the events of September 11 influenced women’s participation in politics, it is necessary to employ a poststructuralist theory, specifically through the lens of discourse analysis. In this context, discourse analysis enables an alternative logic of interpreting the women’s agency in American politics, one that diverges from the conventional frameworks of realism and its understanding of power relations.

The concept of analysis was introduced by Michael Foucault in the 1970s. Emerging from linguistic traditions, discourse theory conceptualizes discourse as a form of speech shaped by external factors, which in turn influence its stylistic characteristics and the final underlying meaning of what had been said. The term “discourse” can be interpreted in various ways. J. Habermas (1993), for instance, conceptualized discourse as an “ideal speech situation”, in which external factors do not influence the arguments used in the interpretation of certain events. In this framework, only the power of assumptions, freed from external influence, determines what is considered as truth claims. Therefore, the group of claims are not perceived as objectively true and false, rather they reflect that socially established and legitimized truth represents only one possible interpretation of events. Thus, poststructuralists consider that, in a sense, “everything is discourse” (Smith-Laign, 2017), since arguments lack any fixed foundation and what is understood as reality is socially constructed. Therefore, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the political actors, it is essential to examine the forms of their communication with the external world. Such an approach allows to reveal the complexity of factors and underlying conditions that shape particular political actions. In other words, understanding discourse is to take into account all the social phenomena, wherein all aspects of social reality can be interpreted as discourse.

Once the War on Terror was proclaimed, the concept of security became the central framework for interpreting both political events and public imagery. However, the notion of “War on Terrorism” itself was not entirely novel. It was used for the first time in the Time journal in

1977 referring to the hijacking of the Lufthansa airplane committed by participants of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. During this historical period, such a phenomenon of “terrorism” was not something unusual, since the events took place during the intensification of international activity of the “New Left” groups (Rapoport, 2013). However, framing the incident through the label “War on Terror” illustrates a discursive construction that further amplifies the phenomenon, particularly by emphasizing the suffering of “innocent victims” such as women and children. Such discursive construction of a “War on...” was also used in the United States during the 1970s under Nixon’s Administration, most notably in the context of the so-called “War on Drugs” (Ching, 2020).

It is important to emphasize that narratives surrounding external security threats are not merely responses to immediate dangers but are deeply incorporated in the construction of national identity. As Campbell (1993) pointed out, “danger itself is not the objective condition”. The interpretation of what constitutes a threat allows to harmonize political views of the voters and serves as a basis for shaping their “moral” political views. Besides, appeals to the existential threat allows the head of state to legitimize their power, particularly in the situations where they face a deficit of political legitimacy.

Within this paradigm, politicians are constructing agendas and frame realities in ways that align with narratives of danger. By portraying participation in military conflicts and participation in the arms races as necessary responses to existential threats, they not only position the state as resilient and strong on the international arena, but also reinforce their own political legitimacy. Throughout the history of American foreign policy, the construction of national identity has been closely tied to the identification of external threats. During the Cold War period, the danger was represented by the existence of the Soviet Union and the countries of the Warsaw Pact, against which the United States initiated an intensive arms race. Following the collapse of the Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations, this framework was reconfigured, and the search for a new “enemy” shifted toward the global terrorism threat.

Returning to the issue of political legitimacy, the 2000 presidential election remains one of the most contested in American political history, with ongoing debates over whether George W. Bush or Al Gore was the winner. The narrow margin of votes (approximately 1%) had the resemblance to the closely questionable election of 1916 between Woodrow Wilson and Charles Evans Hughes (Campbell, 2005). As noted earlier, President George W. Bush's approval rating reached one of the highest levels in American political history following the announcement of the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan. As Levy (1988) observed, there is a notable relationship between the initiation of military conflicts and levels of public support for the incumbent in the United States. Empirical evidence demonstrates that presidential approval ratings tend to rise sharply in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of hostilities, irrespective of either the strategic

success or the perceived legitimacy of the military action. However, such increases in public support are typically short-lived: in cases of prolonged or expensive conflicts, approval ratings tend to decline. A clear illustration of this dynamic is reflected in the case of George W. Bush, whose approval rating rose to 71% at the onset of the U.S. invasion in Iraq, only to decline to 55% in a few months of the same year.

Since nationalism plays a central role in shaping public consciousness, external conflicts and the corresponding “search for an enemy” often function as mechanisms of national cohesion and can simultaneously serve to consolidate the authority of the current government. As previously established, when the concept of “danger” in foreign policy is historically embedded within the construction of national identity, the head of state is able to instrumentalize war and the social solidarity it generates as a tool of strengthening his own political positions. Feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe (2004) supported this idea, claiming that George W. Bush strategically exploited a pervasive feeling of danger in order to strengthen the militarized masculinity concept among the American political elites, while simultaneously embodying this identity himself in order to legitimize his authority.

The emergence of a new external threat and the declaration of the War on Terror facilitated the revival of a discourse centered on the idea of hegemonic military masculinity which implied the political superiority of men (Connell, 2005). A reflection of this was found in the American media covering the events of the 9/11 terrorist attack. The Guardian journalist noted that women virtually disappeared from the American media both as active political agents, with the exception of National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice (The Guardian, 2001), whose role in the conflict resolution was limited. Instead, mass media narratives predominantly portrayed men, on the one hand, as violators of security in the figure of terrorists, and on the other hand, as heroic figures who extinguished fires, restored order, and assumed responsibility for safeguarding national security. The main actors of the post-9/11 decision making were the President of the United States George W. Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Attorney General John Ashcroft. At the same time, the contributions of female rescue workers in New York were largely overlooked and, in many cases, virtually ignored by the media outlets (Berkman, 2002). A similar imbalance was observed among journalists, as the media sector was dominated by men in the United States at the time. For example, in the New York Times, only two articles on the 9/11 terrorist attack were authored by women, compared to forty-eight authored by men (Charlesworth, Chinkin, 2002). Moreover, the American film industry also concentrated on producing films about the events of September 11, with a particular emphasis on male figures who were portrayed as central to managing and resolving the consequences of the terrorist attack. As the Guardian observed, the vast majority of films produced in the aftermath of September 11 did not aim to document the actual events of the tragedy, but rather emphasized the heroic portrayals

of American firefighters, soldiers and politicians. The American media picked up the influence of heroic masculinity and deflected women's agency in the coverage of the September 11 tragedy.

Before the 9/11 terrorist attack, as Tickner (2002) pointed out the concept of hegemonic masculinity was less militarized, and its actors were owners of the large international business corporations, for example, one of them was Bill Gates. Hegemony in the world order itself, before September 11, was business-oriented and associated dominance in the global financial market (Connell, 1998). George W. Bush, reacting on terrorist attack on the September 11, described America and Americans as victims, as well as, he had called on the population to "defend their freedom and democracy" (Bush, 2001) by launching military campaign against Islamic Fundamentalists in Afghanistan and Iraq, shifting the pendulum of hegemonic masculinity from the business orientation to America's military superiority and capacity to self-defense.

Thus, by shifting the focus of attention from key business players, George W. Bush himself assumed the role of "defender of the nation", who is "determined to bring terrorists to justice", while simultaneously assuming the role of global leadership, described as "the leadership that the world needs now" (Bush, 2001). By situating himself as a "protector of the civilized world" and assuming the role of commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Bush reinforced a gender hierarchical structure within American political discourse, in which women were predominantly positioned either as "devoted supporters" or as "victims" of the terrorist attack. However, it is significant to note that George W. Bush's own record of military service was marked by controversy. During the Vietnam War, he enlisted in the Texas Air National Guard, yet official documents indicate that he was absent from his duty station during the final months of his service contract (Enloe, 2004). As Messerschmidt (2015) stated that Bush's foreign policy strategy which was expressed in "in need of the new declaration: if you harbor a terrorist, you are just as guilty as the terrorist; if you fund a terrorist, you are just as guilty as the terrorist" (Bush, 2001), which confirmed his hegemonic masculine heroic protector discourse positioning. Besides that, another characteristic that appeals to hegemonic masculinity is Bush's commitment to "freeing the victims", namely Afghan and Iraqi children and women who "suffered under uncivilized regimes" (Bush, 2001; 2003). This positioning allowed George W. Bush to construct himself simultaneously as a "valiant rescuer" at the national level, protecting the United States from emerging security threats, and at the global level, portraying the military campaigns as a defense of the rights of Afghan and Iraqi women and children.

For American citizens, George W. Bush appealed himself as the ultimate guarantor of the security of Americans, a framing that granted him broad political legitimacy and freedom of action in labelling military interventions as protection from the "uncivilized" world. Such a rhetorical setting allowed the U.S. President to act from a superior position towards his nation, even threatening the American citizens and the world in general by claiming "you are either with us, or

with the terrorist” (Bush, 2001). By applying this discursive construction, in which the head of state is claimed as the one responsible for the national security, the nation itself becomes infantilized, thereby involving the need for a “protective figure” to ensure its survival (Messerschmidt, 2015). This leads to the creation of a dichotomous, gender-based social relations “protector/protected”, where women and children represent vulnerable groups which are in need to be saved by the protector. In this case, the women and children are deprived from their political agency, unable to act independently or articulate their own needs. Furthermore, it reinforces the feeling of admiration of the protector in return for the national security and stability he is providing for the citizens (Young, 2003).

Furthermore, the militarized discourse and the mobilized masculinity influenced the presidential elections of 2004. Both political opponents, President George W. Bush and Senator from Massachusetts John Kerry pointed voter’s attention to their military service experience and as a necessary element for the qualification for presidency. It is noteworthy that John Kerry, as a veteran of the Vietnam War, was actively involved in the anti-war movement, joining the organization of war veterans and addressing the U.S. Senate in 1971 with strong criticism of ongoing military operations and war crimes committed therein. Nevertheless, despite his reputation as an anti-war activist, Senator John Kerry voted in favor of expanding presidential powers under the USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) and supported authorization of military intervention in Iraq (Hendrickson, 2004). It demonstrates how the discourse of militarized masculinity constrained the political environment. In the post-9/11 context, opposition to military operations or expressing the distrust towards the counter-terrorist strategy risked being associated with weakness and a failure to perform the masculine archetype of the strong national protector. Thus, even figures established pacifistic credentials were compelled to align with the dominant discourse of security and military strength.

This tendency was further reflected in the content of the 2004 presidential debates between George W. Bush and John Kerry. Out of ninety minutes of discussion, approximately eighty minutes were devoted to issues of foreign policy and national security, particularly the response to the September 11 attacks and the progress of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. During the debates, both candidates either completely ignored or devoted minimal attention to other pressing issues of the period, such as climate change, strategies with the diplomatic engagement with the rapidly raising power of China, approaches to nuclear deterrence in relation to North Korea and Iran, or the consolidation of the personalized political power in transitory Russia. Instead, their rhetoric overwhelmingly centered on a on the masculine-coded security discourse, repeatedly emphasizing the imperative to “protect the American people” from the Islamic radicalism and constructing this goal as a “primarily duty as President of the United States”.

Among other things, Senator Kerry's, despite his earlier criticism of the Iraq War, ultimately reinforced this discourse by affirming at the end of the debate that "we [the USA] have to win this". Both candidates reaffirmed their willingness on "strengthening military, intelligence and financing more authoritatively the plan for national security". Such framing illustrates how the logic of militarized masculinity sidelined broader policy concerns, positioning strength, protection and military as the attributes of legitimate political leadership.

The discursive shift, reinforced by public opinion, had tangible implications for the institutional representation of women in American politics. In other words, the marginalization of women within the gendered discourse of national security was not limited to rhetorical exclusion, but also materialized in the diminishing presence and visibility of women within the U.S. political institutions. Consequently, examining the patterns of women's political representation in the post-9/11 period provides critical insight into how militarized masculinity constrained female participation at the structural level.

This phenomenon was reflected in the public opinion polls, which revealed how voters conceptualized the ideal head of state in the context of the existence of the "external threat". According to studies of Falk and Kenski (2006), the declaration of the Global War on Terror followed by the U.S. military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq directly affected the saliency of women within both political institutions and public discourse. Moreover, the public opinion surveys revealed a profound gender bias in political preferences, with American respondents indicating a stronger sympathy toward male presidential candidates, which was based on the perception that men are mentally better formed to address issues of national security (Falk, Kenski, 2006). Furthermore, the statistical evidence demonstrated that following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the proportion of respondents willing to support a female presidential candidate declined from 25.3% to 15.4% (Falk, Kenski, 2006). This trend confirmed the hypothesis that the persistence of militarized masculinity within political discourse progressively marginalizes women from both the political and public spheres.

3.2 Female political representation in the US institutions after the 9/11

The U.S. electoral system has undergone significant transformation to formally guarantee women candidates equal participation with men. Nevertheless, despite decades of feminist advocacy, deeply ingrained gender stereotypes regarding "male" and "female" roles continue to shape voter preferences and influence the electoral outcome (Huddy, Terkildsen, 1993; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Bauer, 2013; Banwart, 2010). One of the key factors shaping the preference for male candidates was the persistence of gender stereotypes, particularly the belief that, in the context of the War on Terror, women were less capable than men of governing the country and responding effectively to military threats. As mentioned earlier, gender stereotypes have deep

historical roots and for centuries have functioned as barriers to women's political participation. Traditionally, women have been associated with the role of "keepers of the hearth" and the archetype of the "mother", identities that are culturally constructed as incompatible with aggression, belligerence, or leadership in war and security matters. Within this configuration, female politicians are typically relegated to positions associated with education, family affairs, social welfare, the environment protection, and the safeguarding of children's rights during wartime. By contrast, positions linked to the decision making, security, diplomacy, foreign policy, and defense are discursively constructed as masculine domains, requiring traits such as strength, decisiveness, and aggressiveness that are associated with militarized masculinity. This gendered dichotomy marginalizes women from spheres related to the security area and international politics, reinforcing the perception that they lack the capability to govern in times of crisis.

Besides that, women's participation in politics prior to 9/11 was limited due to the presence of the hyper-masculine culture in the American statecraft which has been historically associated with the legacy of the Founding Fathers. As a result, the foundations of American political culture were constructed by men, which rooted the perception of political power as exclusively reserved for them. Within this framework, women were excluded from formal political participation for much of the U.S. history, first deprived of the right to vote and later constrained from active roles in public office, even as they were symbolically incorporated into the political system. In addition, American society expects the candidate president to be a commander-in-chief in case of a security threat, according to the American constitution. This role is traditionally coded as masculine and, therefore, a female candidate who seeks presidency has to "prove" her capacity for resilience, aggression, and determination in the face of danger. This task seems complicated due to the historical linkage of women's exclusion from the armed forces, and, by extension, from positions of high political authority. Therefore, in this political construct setting female politicians have to build their identity which should be aligned with militarized masculinity (Fox, Oxley, 2013).

Political science scholars have demonstrated that, in the aftermath of 9/11, the imposition of the "protector myth" significantly increased electoral support for male politicians at the expense of equally educated and qualified female candidates (Lawless, 2004). This dynamic reflects broader patterns of voter behavior and political perception: voters tend to associate women with a more liberal and left political orientation (Kittilson, 2018). As a result, the gendered dichotomy of male "protector" against female "caregiver" was projected onto political candidates, reinforcing the militarized masculinity discourse that legitimized men as more suitable leaders in the context of imposed danger on American national security. In this discursive setting female candidates were less likely to be elected to the high-level political positions. This idea was illustrated by the Lawless (2014), which found out that the Federal and State elections of 2002 for the first time in 20 years did not reflect the growth of female politicians, despite a record number of candidates

running for senators, members of the House of Representatives and governors. Instead, women's representation in Congress remained unchanged: only 59 of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 13 of 100 seats in the Senate were held by women.

The same research further revealed that, in the aftermath of 9/11, the electorate largely perceived men as more competent to address security challenges and confront Islamic fundamentalists. Male politicians were considered superior in their presumed ability to conduct military operations in the Middle East and to "protect" the United States abroad. Such perception constructed men as natural warriors and defenders of the nation, thereby marginalizing women's political agency and ability to be elected. Voters were willing to give preferences to the candidate with the more "masculine" traits and who had the experience in the national army service. However, it is important to note that U.S. foreign policy has historically been framed around the notion of an "external threat", militaristic elements have consistently defined political discourse. As a result, during periods of various military engagements, voters tend to favor male candidates, reinforcing gendered hierarchies in leadership despite broader societal trends toward gender equality.

Another illustrative example of the influence of persistence of gender hierarchy caused by militarized masculinity is the electoral behavior of the so-called "Security Moms" (Burrell, 2005). This demographic category referred to women with underage children who, in the aftermath of 9/11, expressed greater trust in George W. Bush than John Kerry on matters of security labelling it as the most pressing issue of American politics. Paradoxically, these women actively supported the Republican party, while largely disregarding the Democratic Party's social welfare initiatives, which were hypothetically more relevant to their everyday concerns (Burrell, 2005). This shift demonstrates how the militarized masculinity of the Bush Administration successfully mobilized traditionalist gender norms, where women assumed the role of loyal supporters of soldiers and the political leader in the exchange for assurance of security protection.

The next notable example of the influence of the 9/11 terrorist attack on women's participation in politics was the mid-term election in 2006. Despite the fact that this election marked an important milestone for women's political representation, when Nancy Pelosi became the first female Majority Leader of the Democratic Party and subsequently Speaker of the House, she remained the sole woman among the party's senior leadership. In contrast, nine out of eleven men from the Democratic Party secured top leadership positions (Tickner, 2014).

This disparity highlights a broader dynamic of post-9/11 American politics, in which women who did achieve visibility or influence in political life often did so within the constraints of militarized masculinity and gendered expectations. While Nancy Pelosi's rise is the example of the progress of formal representation, the broader political arena continued to privilege male leadership. At the same time, prominent figures in the post-9/11 period such as Condoleezza Rice,

Laura Bush, and later Hillary Clinton navigated this discursive environment in different ways, either by connecting themselves with the national security agenda, reinforcing the protector construct, or framing women's issues in ways that resonated with the post-9/11 state order. Their trajectories illustrate how women's political participation after the September 11 terrorist attack was shaped by the dominance of the security-centered discourse.

Therefore, it is essential to examine the political behavior of the most active female political figures, such as, the National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. First Lady Laura Bush and U.S. Senator from New York (and later Secretary of State and presidential candidate) Hillary Clinton in order to analyze how post-9/11 discourse shaped women's participation in American politics. Condoleezza Rice had a particular significance during this period, as she was among the most visible women in the Bush Administration and directly engaged with national security matters since she was appointed as National Security Advisor. Laura Bush is also noteworthy, as she emerged as a prominent spokesperson in articulating narratives of security in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Her role, moreover, exemplifies the archetype of the "Beautiful Soul", in which women are positioned as caring and nurturing body, in this case, the symbolic mother of the American people, and simultaneously representing the loyal supporter of a warrior leader spouse. Hillary Clinton's political career is examined in order to discover how the construction of "militarized" masculinity affects the positioning of female politicians in the presidential race, as well as the gendered constraints and stigmatization they face when articulating their ambition to run for the presidency of the United States.

Condoleezza Rice

Condoleezza Rice was appointed by George W. Bush in 2001 as a National Security Advisor and became the first woman to hold this political position. In 2005, after George W. Bush reelection she became the second woman who was appointed as Secretary of State, after Madeline Albright. As Bashevkin (2018), Condoleezza Rice's academic background and her practical political experience within the executive branch shaped her leadership style characterized by directness and assertiveness, enabling her to articulate her positions forcefully and confront political opponents. Within the International Relations scholarship, she is considered as a politician who is following the realist interpretation on world politics. The application of the realist paradigm allowed Condoleezza Rice to become the part of the broader "militarized" masculinity discourse and enter the position of the National Security Adviser of George W. Bush. Administration without any rigid barriers (Clemons, Ghose, 2010) in the form of the glass ceilings that Democratic women most often face. Condoleezza Rice herself admitted that her foreign policy views were shaped by classical realists, including Hans Morgenthau, former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski under Jimmy Carter and John Erickson (Heilbrunn, 1999), who tend

to portray the international arena as “the war of all against all” and only military power can ensure the survival of the state in the world politics. George W. Bush frequently portrayed Condoleezza Rice as his irreplaceable “right-hand” thus becoming one of the actors of the power politics in the post-9/11. Rice was one of the key ideological architects behind the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, central to the broader post-9/11 response. In this framework, Condoleezza Rice both adopted and reinforced the logic of militarized masculinity, which associates effective leadership with the application of security through force. Therefore, while being incorporated into the Bush Administration, Condoleezza Rice herself is one of the representatives of the militarized masculinity discourse. Thus, Condoleezza Rice, contrary to the existing stereotypes of “peaceful women”, emerged as an active figure in the militarized resolution of the U.S. national security issues. As the result, in the media outlets and cartoons, Rice was frequently labelled through objectifying constructs such as “mammy”, “matriarch”, “jezebel”, “admiral”, “sexualized warrior princess”, “dominative” (Alexander-Floyd, 2008; Eisenstein, 2007). In seeking to explain Rice’s “belligerent behavior” and to reinforce gendered hierarchies that strays from the general picture of “traditional” ideas about female politicians, the media often speculated about the personal life and sexual orientation of the National Security Adviser (Alexander-Floyd, 2008) in order to discredit her “militarized” political leadership in the eyes of the voters by pointing out her “inferiority” as a woman due to the lack of children and an “appropriate” marital status.

Although the case of Condoleezza Rice is particularly noteworthy because, despite the assimilated features of the militarized masculinity discourse in her political behavior, she resisted full assimilation into the patriarchal framework that typically categorizes women in politics either as “iron ladies” or as hyper-feminized pacifists. Instead, Rice strategically balanced these gendered expectations, adopting both strength within a masculinized security discourse and independence from its binary opposition. Furthermore, her long-standing emphasis on individual will and freedom (Rice, 1994) demonstrates this balancing effect: despite her conservative views, she opposed the imposition of abortion bans, thereby aligning herself within principles of personal autonomy rather than with rigid patriarchal ideas.

Another illustration of Rice’s balancing within the discourse of militarized masculinity can be found in her application of “protection of women’s rights” as a justification for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan (Ferguson, 2007). While the Bush Administration frequently employed the protection of the Afghan women as a symbolic rationale for military intervention, Condoleezza Rice did not foreground this issue in her speeches or in the 2002 National Security Strategy. Instead, she used the understanding of humanitarian aid in the broader concerns of security, which could result in achieving freedom in the rough states in a broader sense. In this way, Rice simultaneously avoided the stereotypical association of women leaders with “soft”

humanitarianism while strengthening her credibility within the masculinist realm of security politics.

One of Condoleezza Rice's most heavily criticized political decisions was the military operation in Iraq, which also reflected a "masculinist" political image, in which security issues were framed under the existence of existential threat coming from rogue states. From Rice's point of view, the "hard power" political tools were regarded as the most effective, and indeed only legitimate, means of addressing them. In the National Security Strategy (NNS, 2002) the National Security advisor pointed out that "rogue states" are demonstrating an existential threat to the world since they are holding and supplying the weapons of mass destruction. In line with the logic of militarized masculinity response to the security issues, Condoleezza Rice advocated for preemptive actions as a measure to deter these states, rather than relying on diplomatic pressure, privileging decisive, force-oriented action.

Condoleezza Rice's justifications for the invasion of Iraq were primarily framed through a securitized discourse, pointing out Saddam Hussein's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction and the potential threat they posed to the United States. In a CNN interview Rice claimed: "There will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he [Saddam Hussein] can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud" (CNN, 2002). Yet, in the same interview, Rice tried to evade the question whether Iraq is planning to use the weapons of mass destruction against the United States. Notably, unlike many of her colleagues in the Bush Administration, Condoleezza Rice did not rely on the overtly militarized masculine rhetoric. Instead, according to her discursive reasoning, the core reasons for the preemptive strike measure was the protection of American national security. Rice did not anchor her rhetorical practices on appeals to "American bravery", "American strength" or on hyper-masculine imagery like "we [Americans] will smoke them [terrorists] out of their holes". Rather, her emphasis on security concerns allowed her to legitimize military action within a masculinized political environment while simultaneously distancing herself from the overtly gendered rhetoric.

Thus, taking into consideration the arguments mentioned: the rejection of use the feminized construct of humanitarian issues in Iraq and Afghanistan, her resolute and uncompromising approach to military interventions in the "War on Terror", and her relative disregard for a broader gender agenda, Condoleezza Rice, as the first woman to serve as National Security Adviser, appears to have carefully balanced between the dichotomies of hyper-masculinization and hyper-feminization in constructing her political image. Rather than being reduced either to her archetype of the "iron lady" or the "Beautiful Soul", Rice strategically navigated the gender constraints of militarized masculinity. As she later recalled in her memoirs, she felt compelled to be "twice as good" as her counterparts and refused to label herself as a "victim" (Rice, 2007), thereby asserting herself politically from the gender-based stereotypes.

In the post-9/11, the First Lady of the United States Laura Bush appeared as one of the publicly visible women. Once the September 11 terrorist attack occurred, as Laura Bush herself admitted in an interview, it was the beginning of the George W. Bush presidency and she, as the First Lady, was “hitting the stride” (Bush, 2011). In the 9/11 aftermath, Laura Bush politically became the nation’s “consoler-in-chief” (Von der Lippe, Väyrynen, 2011), having constructed her political performativity around the archetype of the “empathetic women and mother”. Yet this maternal identity was not limited to private grief of care, rather she fused it with an active rhetorical commitment to U.S. national defense interests. As previously discussed, in her radio address to the Americans, Laura Bush centered her message on the protection of women and children (Laura Bush, 2001). Feminists scholars note that when politicians invoke the “issues of women-and-children” in the context of security threats, such rhetoric functions less as a genuine humanitarian concern and more as a strategic tool to reinforce nationalistic sentiment and mute political polarization (Enloe, 1990, 1996; Von der Lippe, Väyrynen, 2011). Female politicians who are presenting women and children as symbolic victims, like in case of the justification for the military intervention of Afghanistan, reinforce the militarized masculinity dichotomy of “protector/protected”. Gradually, the First Lady became the Bush Administration's spokesperson on women’s issues, including in the domestic realm. In 2004, Laura Bush took part in the presidential campaign rally of George W. Bush, namely “W” Stands for Women”, which sought to mobilize support around family rights in America. Following George W. Bush’s reelection, the First Lady continued to meet with Afghan women, reinforcing the narrative of protecting the “rights of women and children” who were suffering under the Taliban regime and terrorists. By mobilizing this maternal discourse, Laura Bush discursively justified the War on Terror, therefore, normalizing the masculine discourse on security threats within the American political environment.

The selection of Laura Bush as the Administration’s primary spokesperson on women’s rights reinforced the framework of militarized masculinity. While the Bush Administration projected a relatively “pro-feminist” stance by foregrounding women’s issues, these issues were nonetheless framed with the conservative worldview of the Republican Party. In this configuration, the First Lady, who left her professional career to raise children and who shared her husband’s political views, represented the traditional gender construct of the “ideal mother-women”. Her political role thus remained narrowly focused: she spoke as a wife and mother defending the family, rather than as an autonomous political actor, thereby reinforcing the gender hierarchical relation that appeared as the result of the “War on Terror” militarized narratives.

Hillary Clinton's political positioning during, and particularly after, September 11, vividly illustrates how "militarized discourse" shaped and constrained women's participation in American politics after the emergence of the war sentiments. Once the September 11 terrorist attack occurred, Hillary Clinton, then the newly appointed U.S. Senator from New York, positioned herself firmly within the discourse of militarized masculinity. In her post-9/11 speech, she declared that "the terrorist attack was the attack on America", thereby framing the attack in terms of national tragedy and unity against an external threat. This reinforced the request among New Yorkers for a "strong" male leader who could reestablish order and restore a sense of security for the city's residents. Senator Clinton a few days after the terrorist attack expressed her support for President George W. Bush, emphasizing that "not only those who harbor terrorists will now face the wrath of our country" (Clinton, 2001). By adopting such rhetoric, she reinforced the protector narrative central to militarized masculinity both domestically and internationally. Hillary Clinton further confirmed Bush's binary approach, claiming that "you are either with America, either you are not" (Clinton, 2001), which establishes the nationalistic sentiments of loyalty among the electorate towards the state in the face of the security threat. This allowed to strengthen the electoral consensus in order to harmonize the public opinion in support of the political decisions of George W. Bush in the aftermath of the September 11 attack. Additionally, she appealed to New Yorkers, assuring them that the security situation will be stabilized, as "the defense is more resolute than ever" (Clinton, 2001). This rhetoric demonstrates how Clinton strategically adopted masculine-coded discourse in order to establish her credibility as a national security actor. Later on, Senator Clinton supported Bush's further military operation in Afghanistan and Iraq, the enactment of the PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) and approved funding for American military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Boshevkin, 2018), therefore, legitimizing Bush's hegemonic manliness construct.

Clinton's political leadership style in the realm of foreign policy and security is unlikely to be characterized as "pacifistic" or detached from masculinity framework. Hillary Clinton, as the reasons for the military intervention in Afghanistan, highlighted the Taliban's violation of women's rights and emphasized the need to "empower Afghan women with freedom", therefore reinforcing the protector/protected narrative proposed by George W. Bush (Clinton, 2001). In her speeches she portrayed Afghan women as victims in the need for U.S. protection, while the United States themselves should assume the role of the international security policy. By doing so, Clinton aligned herself with the broader security discourse of the Bush Administration, confirming that appeals to women's rights as an effective tool of legitimizing military intervention.

Hillary Clinton's political character diverges significantly from that of Condoleezza Rice and Laura Bush. Unlike Rice, who sought to balance between hyper-masculinization and selective distancing from it, and Bush, who embodied the maternal role, Clinton seemed to fully embrace the discourse of militarized masculinity. Hillary Clinton's rhetoric and policy stances were consistently framed through determination and readiness to confront security challenges head-on. A clear example was her authorization of U.S. and NATO Allies intervention in Libya in 2011, following the Arab Spring. This positioning can be read not only as a reflection of her personal political character but also as a strategic move to prepare for her future presidential candidacy, where demonstrating traditional "warrior" traits and the ability to handle the crisis were essential to be perceived as a credible female commander-in-chief.

After Barack Obama's election victory in 2008, feminist researchers observed that the presidential discourse shifted toward a softer form of masculinity compared to overtly aggressive militarized rhetoric of George W. Bush (Tickner, 2014). Obama's election campaign proposed a new approach to security, one that promised diplomacy over unilateral military interventions. After the elections, Obama's Administration moved to dissolve Guantanamo prison, where the suspected terrorists were imprisoned; withdrew troops from Iraq in 2011, and reduced nuclear arsenals through the signing of the START III treaty. In 2015 the USA PATRIOT Act ((Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) was formally abolished and instead the USA Freedom Act was passed, prohibiting state intelligence agencies from conducting surveillance on citizens. Upon assuming office, Barack Obama, together with Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, applied the concept of "smart power" of foreign policy and security, which was supposed to serve as a consensus between the use of "hard power" in the form of a military response and "soft power" in the form of diplomatic methods of conflict resolution (Landreau, 2011). This discursive move still operated within the framework of militarized masculinity, as it still used the logic of strength and protection, but rather rearticulated it in a more pragmatic way.

One of the core political actions of Hillary Clinton is drawing attention towards women's rights. In 2010, she introduced what became known as "The Hillary Doctrine", which argued women's rights and the fight against gender-based violence should be incorporated into the U.S. National Security Strategy (Clinton, 2010). By framing the empowerment of women as a stabilizing factor in both foreign and domestic politics, Clinton translated a traditionally humanitarian issue into security scope. Thus, reframed women's equality not merely as a moral imperative, but as a matter of strategic necessity, thereby adapting feminist concerns to the persisting in the society concept of the gendered relations. In interviews, she reinforced this view by declaring that the 21st century must be the era of elimination of gender inequality (Clinton, 2017). Beyond the rhetoric, Clinton also institutionalized her approach through concrete policy

action. In 2009, the Office of International Women's Initiatives was renamed the Office of Global Women's Issues, tasked with advancing gender equality abroad as an integral part of the U.S. foreign policy (Boshevkin, 2018). These actions were also linked to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which aimed to expand women's participation in politics and protect women's rights during armed conflicts and post-conflicts reconstruction.

Therefore, for Hillary Clinton to run for president of the United States, she had to balance between adopting the determination and forcefulness associated with masculine solutions in security and foreign policy, and simultaneously foregrounding the protection of women's rights, even in the context of military conflict. Under the militarized masculinity discourse, her public image was thus shaped by a double standard: female candidates were expected not only to match men in demonstrating toughness, but to surpass them by "competently" combining these with traditionally feminine qualities of care (Slaughter, 2012). In the similar logic, female emotionality is constructed as inexcusable and politically damaging. A clear example is the reaction to Hillary Clinton's display of vulnerability during the 2008 election campaign, when her voice trembled while responding to a journalist's question. Clinton admitted that the campaign was difficult and emphasized that it was personal for her, as she did not want Americans to "fall backwards as a nation" (Clinton, 2007). Yet, immediately after the release of this interview, her support rating plummeted from 46% to 22% (the Guardian, 2008), while the press harshly criticized her for showing emotions in public. In this regard, Hillary Clinton had returned to a more masculine and tough masculine strategy in the 2008 presidential rally (Jones, 2016). These fluctuating strategy changes reveal how the gendered constructs place women in the male-dominated field: female candidates who fail to embody stoicism and toughness, they will face the delegitimization, as they are judged against expectations that normalize a masculine model of leadership, particularly for those aspiring to the presidency. Thus, Hillary Clinton, as well as, other female presidential candidates are facing a dichotomous crisis of their self-identification: presenting oneself as a distinctly "feminine" politician often alienates voters, since a female candidate is perceived as unable to withstand the pressure and responsibilities of the head of state. At the same time, adopting a "masculine" style of leadership can also repel the electorate, as women are then criticized for appearing "excessively tough" or "angry". Meanwhile, a so-called "neutral" approach strategy rarely resonates with American voters, since the political culture, shaped by masculine dominance, expects leaders to embody strength, resilience, and assertiveness in matters of national security.

In this context, Hillary Clinton remained committed to the idea of American and NATO intervention in Libya, even though Barack Obama himself later admitted that the aftermath of the operation had been the "worst mistake" (Obama, 2016) of his presidency. Clinton's stance illustrated how her political identity was tied to the discourse of "protector" of the construct of

militarized masculinity, reaffirming that Libyan citizens “were under the threat of the massacre” (Clinton, 2016).

In 2015, Hillary Clinton became the first major nominee for the presidency from the Democratic Party and the first female candidate participating in the general elections in American history. After Clinton’s nomination as the main candidate of the Democratic Party, an extensive debate emerged in American society whether gender should matter when evaluating a suitable presidential candidate. Hillary Clinton’s electoral campaign combined a number of various issues, such as: combating addiction use, HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer’s, autism, implementation of economic reforms, combating sexualized violence, climate change, poverty, terrorism and strengthening national security, strengthening the armed forces and national security, empowering people with disabilities, combating the epidemic of armed violence, implementation of healthcare reforms, regulating the immigration legislation, protecting the LGBT rights, combating racial and gender discrimination, improving workers’ rights and others (The Office of Hillary Rodham Clinton, 2016). The proposed list of presidential campaign’s issues aligns with the earlier hypothesis that, under the influence of militarized masculinity, female politicians are compelled to navigate a double bind, therefore, balancing between stereotypically “feminine” concerns, such as social welfare and education, and “masculine” concerns, such as security, military intervention, economic stability, in order to gain legitimacy during the election period. While her main rival, Donald Trump, focused heavily on tax cuts, combating illegal migration, implementing a temporary ban on Muslim entering the United States, refinancing NATO, revising trade policy, strengthening sanctions against Iran, combating the spread of radical Islamism, and reforming the healthcare system (2016 Republican Party Platform). The overarching emphasis was placed on traditional and essentialistic on security, economy and foreign policy, with a limited emphasis on issues of social welfare. Shortly after Hillary Clinton announced her presidential proposals, her opponent, Donald Trump accused her of “playing the woman card” (Trump, 2016), devaluing her broad and comprehensive agenda, reducing it to a narrow focus on so-called “women’s issues”. In response, Hillary Clinton stated: “If fighting for women’s health care and paid family leave and equal pay is playing the “woman card”, then deal me in” (Clinton, 2016).

Unusual dynamics was noted in the presidential debates, shaped by candidates’ communication styles and political backgrounds. Hillary Clinton’s responses often drew upon the militarist sentiments when addressing foreign policy and national security. For example, she emphasized the need “to squeeze” ISIS out of Iraq and Syria (Clinton, 2016), discourse evoking force, toughness, and power. She also reminded the public of her role in the elimination of Osama bin Laden, positioning herself as a leader with the strength, resolve, and experience to confront global terrorism. By foregrounding these narratives, Clinton attempted to demonstrate her capacity to perform within a political culture where legitimacy is aligned with the readiness to protect the

nation. In response, Donald Trump argued that, as a result of the interventions led by Obama and Clinton, the world had become even more “in trouble” (Trump, 2016), insisting that America should stop acting as the “world’s policeman” by sponsoring and participating in global crises. On the surface, Trump appeared to delegitimize the construct of militarized masculinity tied to launching military interventions against Islamic groups. However, his rhetoric continued to reproduce “hard power” approaches in foreign policy. For instance, his stance toward Iran reflected an aggressive and hyper-militarized posture, as he promised to “shot [Iranians] out of water” (Trump, 2016) if Iranian forces approached the U.S. Navy. Trump attempted to critique interventionism while reinforcing the domination-centered rhetoric. However, Trump’s strongest appeal to the construct of militarized masculinity came in response to the moderator’s final question about why he believed Hillary Clinton did not have a “presidential look”. He argued that Clinton “lacked stamina” and would not be capable of negotiating with leaders such as those of Saudi Arabia and Japan on matters of military protection and arms sales (Trump, 2017). In making this claim, Trump reproduced the traditional militarized masculinity narrative that positions issues of war, weapons, and national security as inherently “male” domains. By suggesting that Clinton was unfit for these responsibilities, Trump reinforced the discursive practice that women should remain outside the sphere of military security and focus instead on “soft” issues, traditionally devoted to women in politics.

As a result of the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump secured victory through the Electoral College, while Hillary Clinton won the popular vote. These results were unprecedented in scale, marking a turning point in U.S. political history. Political scholars emphasize that the 2016 elections were less about affirmative support for a candidate and more about voting protest against the opposing one (Powell, Butterfield, Jiang, 2018). In this sense, the electorate’s choice reflected a deeply polarized political climate, where many voters and electors effectively voted against rather than for a particular candidate, underscoring the intensity of division within American society.

Transferring the election results under the gender scope, Trump as a candidate performed in the hegemonic masculinity realm. He openly rejected non-traditional women in politics, such as Hillary Clinton, appreciating those women who fit into the archetype of the “Beautiful Soul”, characterized by softness, femininity and motherhood. At the same time, Trump projected a stereotypical perception of manhood onto U.S. politics by accusing the Obama Administration, blaming it for being too “weak” and making America feminized, thereby framing the nation as vulnerable and in need of protection (Geraghty, 2015). In this case, protection was framed less in terms of fighting Islamic fundamentalism and more in relation to threats posed by illegal immigration and Iran. Additionally, the concept of hegemonic masculinity legitimizes the “hierarchical relationship between men and women, as well as dominance over subjugated

masculinities” (Connell, 2005), therefore, this lens provides one of the explanations of Trump's critique of Obama presidency. As Vescio and Schermerhorn (2021) pointed out, as the part of their research, they defined Hillary Clinton as a “intersected woman” and Donald Trump as a “hypermasculine man” and election’s results signaled that American society is more strived to choose a candidate with a more aggressive form of masculinity. Scholars also argue that Trump’s open expression of nationalism and prejudice against racial, national, and sexual minorities, women, immigrants, and other marginalized groups reflects a key attribute of hegemonic masculinity. Such discourse allows Donald Trump to perform dominance and superiority in a paternalistic manner, reinforcing hierarchical social orders. This performative assertion of control resonates with those parts of the electorate who interpret such a construct as “true leadership” and associate it with the demonstration of strength (Vescio, Schermerhorn, 2021).

Women’s participation in politics post-9/11

Thus, the post-9/11 political landscape demonstrated that women’s political representation in the U.S. remained embedded within the construct of militarized and hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, American female politicians are facing enormous amounts of constraints while competing among men with the same rules setting. After the 9/11 terrorist attack, women have to achieve an equilibrium between feminine and masculine gender performativity in order to have societal credibility. Yet, despite the clear visibility of women such as Condoleezza Rice, Laura Bush, Nancy Pelosi, and Hillary Clinton in the post-9/11 U.S. politics, structural representation of women in government, Congress and local legislatures remained limited. For example, women’s presence in the Senate increased only marginally from 9% to 14% between 1999 and 2004, while in the House of Representative rose from 12,9% to 14,9% during the same period. Representation in state legislatures stagnated at 22,5%, and in the U.S. Cabinet women’s share even declined dramatically, from 40,9% under the Clinton Administration to 23,8% under George W. Bush (Pew Research Center, 2023). This data illustrates that women’s political inclusion remained stagnated, signaling about the influence of the militarist masculinity construct, which contains women’s active involvement in politics. The case of Hillary Clinton illustrated that female presidential candidates are compelled to embody a symbiosis of “feminine” and “masculine” traits. However, when it comes to national security, they are expected above all to perform belligerence and determination, aligning themselves with the logic of militarized masculinity in order to be perceived as electable.

3.3 Current trends on militarized masculinity and women's empowerment in U.S. and international politics

As noted by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2023), the current state of global security and world order is facing deterioration compared to the past decades. Key markers of this decline include the escalation of armed conflicts, such as, the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine since February 2022, the intensification of conflict between Israel and Palestine, the civil war in Myanmar, as well as the temporary escalation of conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan, India and Pakistan, Thailand and Cambodia, Congo and Rwanda, which have seen already settled through peace agreements. Rising levels of military expenditure further reflect the instability and heightened tensions in the international system (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2024). Another crucial factor undermining global security is the collapse of nuclear arms control frameworks, triggered by Russian withdrawal from the arms control agreements, such as the New START Agreement, Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban. These developments have created the threat of nuclear confrontation, symbolically represented by the “Doomsday clock” being moved to its closest point to midnight in the since its creation in 1947 (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2025).

In this context of escalating global insecurity, the concepts of “militarized masculinity” and “hegemonic masculinity” have once again come to the forefront. As feminist scholars Choi, de Souza, F., Lind, Parashar, Prügl, Zalewski (2025) note, in 2025 we are currently witnessing a full-scale backlash against nearly all areas of gender equality. Over the past decade, a wave of anti-feminism has emerged, which was actively sponsored and supported by governments and other governmental and non-governmental entities. Against the backdrop of rising armed conflicts, resurgent nationalism, and the mobilization of men into war and security structures, traditional gender stereotypes have been reinforced globally, as well as the dominance of militarized and patriarchal logics within politics and society.

Conservative governments of Donald Trump in the United States, Vladimir Putin in Russia, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, Narendra Modi in India applied the anti-gender policies and discourses in order to establish the “traditional patriarchal family” and address bring back “traditional values” in order to legitimize their own governments (Bjarnegård, Zatterberg, 2022). Such policies represented a reaction to shifting attitudes toward women's rights, with their primary aim being the restoration of the patriarchal status quo. As mentioned earlier, within a patriarchal order, or what can be described as the framework of “militarized masculinity”, relations between men and women are structured through rigid gender hierarchies. Within this social structure, there are mechanisms of control not only for women but also over the broad population, which become normalized and legitimized through the masculinity discourse.

Consequently, society becomes infantilized, while the autocratic regime assumes the role of the political regulator and protector in a perpetual “war of all against all”.

In the context of U.S. domestic politics, Donald Trump’s first presidential term was marked by repeated challenges to women’s rights. His administration threatened women’s reproductive rights, openly insulted and humiliated female politicians by questioning their competence, and sought to undermine progress toward wage equality between men and women (Ahmed, Phadke, Boesh, 2020). In 2024, Donald Trump announced his intention to run for president, with the U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris emerged as his main rival. On the one hand, Harris’ candidacy represented another step forward in the progress of women’s political participation in American politics. On the other hand, her eventual defeat demonstrated the persistence of gendered hierarchies in the U.S. political culture: the electorate continues to make their choice toward the figure of a “masculine hegemon” as the most legitimate embodiment of leadership. Throughout the election campaign, Trump repeatedly said that he “is going to protect women, whether they want it or not” (Trump, 2024), therefore, setting the “protector/protected discourse” between him and the female part of the electorate.

During his second term, Trump took a course to combat feminism by issuing an executive order on “Defeating Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government”. According to this executive order, men who identify themselves as women directly “violate women’s rights” (Executive Order 14168, 2025). The Trump Administration also claims that they intend to protect women’s rights and their freedoms by using “clear” and “accurate” language and laws that recognize that “women are biologically women” and “men are biologically men” (Executive Order 14168, 2025). The enactment of this executive order allowed Trump to suspend funding for programs addressing issues of gender identity, including those previously overseen by the government.

Such measures reflected the broader logic of hegemonic masculinity of the U.S. home affairs, where gender equality initiatives were portrayed as marginal or even threatening to the patriarchal status quo. In this regard, such a course of actions allows the U.S. President to govern from a position of power and dominance with minimal constraints, what is one of the attributes of the “militarized masculinity” concept. While this model performs assertiveness and decisiveness, it simultaneously threatens the resilience of democratic institutions by normalizing authoritarian tendencies. Such gender relations might lead societies to war (Cockburn, 2010), since the association of “true masculinity: with militarism can be strategically used by governments to mobilize the male population and fuel nationalist sentiments. Although Donald Trump acted as a mediator in several peace agreements recently and even initiated the negotiation process between Russia and Ukraine, he simultaneously pursued a hard-power approach toward Iran. By authorizing attacks on Iran’s nuclear facilities, Trump relied on a securitizing narrative that framed

Iran as a threat of “nuclear proliferation” and a “sponsor of terrorism” (BBC News, 2025). Alarmist sentiments were fueled by the reaction of Donald Trump during the meeting in Washington with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and EU leaders. When asked by a journalist about the possibility of holding elections in Ukraine, Zelenskyy replied that “democratic elections would be possible after the end of the war”, as stated by the Ukrainian Constitution. In response, Donald Trump asked a clarifying question: “So you say during the war, you can’t have elections?... Oh, that’s good”, and then immediately amorticizing his words by adding: “I wonder what the fake news is going to say” (ABC, 2025). Among Trump’s subsequent actions was the renaming of the Department of Defense as the Department of War (The Wall Street Journal, 2025), alongside the initiation of armed operations against drug trafficking in Venezuela and the designation of drug traffickers as “terrorists” (Reuters, 2025), all of which contributed to a new round of militaristic discourse.

Since Trump’s presidential campaign, the current U.S. President has floated ideas such as the seizure of Greenland, the Panama Canal and Canada, thereby forming a new round of rhetorical militarization. In the light of prevailing global military trends and the growing support among both politicians and voters for conservative right-wing parties, the concept of militarized masculinity has regained relevance.

In contemporary American politics, Donald Trump has employed a security-centered discourse to portray issues such as illegal migration, gender studies, and the activities of figures like George Soros as existential threats, thereby positioning himself as the nation’s savior. This strategy contributes to the delegitimization of progressive voices, as scholars and experts in gender studies are increasingly framed as “enemies”, producing new stigmas around gender equality and women’s political participation (Peto, 2024). Consequently, the long-standing struggle for women’s rights is being reframed in terms of “family values” and traditionalist frameworks, creating additional barriers to women’s full political participation, similarly to those in the post-9/11 politics.

Conclusion

Despite the long-standing struggles for equality, the events of September 11 and the subsequent “War on Terror” exerted an even more polarizing effect on gender differences. The boundaries between “female” and “male” political roles became more sharply delineated under the influence of militarized masculinity discourse. From the perspective of feminist theory, the long-term historical normalization of gender inequality ensured that political authority continued to be associated with masculine-related traits such as objectivity, decisiveness, and strength, while traditionally feminine attributes such as emotionality, passivity, or hesitation were stigmatized and devalued (Enloe, 2007). This discursive environment both marginalized women’s political agency and constrained their participation, as female politicians were either relegated to supporting roles, embodying archetypes such as the “caring mother”, or compelled to adopt masculinized political traits to remain credible.

The historical part presented in the Chapter 1 of this dissertation highlighted one of the adverse consequences of the construct of “militarized” masculinity, namely its persistent and detrimental impact of women’s rights. Despite the significant progress achieved through the women’s rights movement, the concept of “militarized” masculinity often slows down or even erases these achievements, replacing egalitarian trends with more hierarchical gender relations embedded within patriarchal systems. A striking example is France in the post-revolutionary period: although women gained limited civil rights, such as the ability to obtain a divorce and the inheritance rights, these gains were quickly reversed after the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. The Napoleonic Code effectively dismantled the advances made during the Revolution by reasserting patriarchal control and confining women once again to the domestic sphere.

Thus, it was observed that the armed conflicts reinforced hierarchical gender relations in which the “strong and masculine” leader assumed the role of protector over those categorized as “weak” and “indecisive”, further discouraging women’s autonomous political participation. A particularly notable example, highlighted by feminist scholars, is George W. Bush self-image as the nation’s “defender” within his “War on Terror” rhetoric (Young, 2003). By presenting simultaneously as a guarantor of freedom, justice, and women’s rights, Bush instrumentalized feminist language to reinforce militarized masculinity. Yet, as many feminists’ scholars argue, such postulates had little substantive effect on improving the conditions of women abroad, for in Afghanistan (Berry, 2003). Rather, interventions carried out in the name of women’s emancipation often exacerbated instability and created new spaces for future anti-feminist actors, like Taliban, echoing patterns visible since the Cold War.

In this sense, women in Afghanistan and Iraq, much like women in the United States, lost political subjectivity when the figure of the “protector” emerged, transferring agency and political

will to the masculine leader who claimed to act on their behalf (Eichler, 2013). This dynamic was reinforced by Bush's broader securitized discursive practices, which included the imposition of severe criminal penalties for suspected support for Islamic fundamentalism. Collectively, these developments demonstrate how post-9/11 political discourse evoked militarized masculinity, limiting the scope of women's political participation and shaping the gender hierarchies that continue to characterize U.S. politics after 2008.

It was noted that, according to feminist researchers, one of the hidden consequences of post-9/11 security policies was the centralization of executive power and the emergence of authoritarian tendencies, particularly observed after the adoption of the USA PATRIOT Act (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act). As a result, this legislation curtailed citizens' rights to privacy and confidentiality, authorizing intelligence agencies to monitor private communications and expanding the state's capacity for surveillance. Feminist scholars found out that such militarized designs not only function externally but also operate as mechanisms of control over domestic populations, particularly in the context where political legitimacy is fragile (Berry, 2003; Peterson, 2014). This was observed after the analysis of George W. Bush political course of actions, who entered office with one of the narrowest electoral margins in U.S. history and subsequently sought to consolidate authority through securitized narratives.

Replying to the stated research question of this dissertation, *from the perspective of feminist theory, how did the events of September 11 influence women's participation in U.S. politics*, we are highlighting the following tendencies. First of all, women politicians, and women more broadly, were symbolically re-positioned as both reproducers of the nation and markers of cultural continuity. Therefore, feminist analysis noted that the increased attention was paid to reproductive functions and to character traits such as care, compliance, and nurturing shaped by patriarchal gender socialization (Peterson, 2014). It was found out that under the framework of militarized masculinity, women's bodies and roles thus became subject to intensified regulation by male-dominated political structures. The second tendency noted was the public condemnation in case if an American female politician was showing any "behavioral" deviation from these prescribed norms, including the pursuit of autonomous political ambitions outside the role of the faithful spouse. This dynamic was visible in the cases of Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton, both of whom faced intrusive evaluation of their private lives. It was observed that their legitimacy as political figures were measured not only in terms of professional capacity but also in relation to conformity with traditional roles as wives and mothers. Women who failed to embody these ideals were frequently accused of "inadequacy" or "deviation", particularly if they sought positions of significant political power.

The third tendency of influence of women's participation in American policy was illustrated by Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign self-image. Within the existing U.S. political culture, shaped by militarized discourse, her most viable strategy was to adopt a hybrid identity: simultaneously performing the role of the nurturing mother and the resolute commander prepared to respond decisively to external threats. This strategic balancing act underscores how militarized masculinity constrained the range of acceptable political identities available to women.

Therefore, it was noted that public opinion polls and statistical data showing a decline in the trust and confidence of women occupying the highest political posts in the years immediately following 9/11 further support this argument (Falk, Kenski, 2006). Feminist scholars pointed out that the September 11 attacks and the subsequent securitization of political discourse contributed to a contraction in women's political participation (Messerschmidt, 2015; Young, 2003). It was found out that the consolidation of the ideal of "militarized masculinity" reinforced rigid gender hierarchies, thereby narrowing the scope for female agency in the American political landscape.

Thus, applying a gender lens on the events of 9/11 demonstrated that one of the key factors constraining women's political participation in the United States was not merely the persistence of historical gender inequality, but rather the dominance of militarized narratives that actively constructed and reinforced women's subordinate position within the political hierarchy.

This dissertation found out another notable example of the influence of the concept of "militarized" masculinity on women's participation in national security institutions of the army was the following phenomenon. Contrary to popular feminist belief that the inclusion of women in military institutions structures and decision-making on issues of war and peace might promote a "softer" or more peace-oriented approach, the example of the events at Abu Ghraib prison during the U.S. invasion of Iraq demonstrates otherwise. Women who enter the American armed forces do not fundamentally transform the patriarchal structure of the military by their presence. Rather, due to the rigid discipline and institutionalized norms of the army as a patriarchal construct (Goldstein, 2001), they are compelled to adapt their gender performativity to align with "hegemonic" masculinity in order to avoid marginalization of harassment by male colleagues and to secure their own survival within the institution.

Therefore, an alternative step toward weakening entrenched gender hierarchies lies in the demilitarization of masculinity, namely, the societal recognition and validation of multiple alternative forms of masculine identity, as well as the parallel demilitarization of femininity, expressed in archetypes such as the patriotic mother, the loyal military wife, or the passive subject in need of male protection.

The scholarly novelty of this research lies in its examination of the impact of the September 11 terrorist attack on women's political participation. Particular attention is devoted to the role of masculinized political discourse in shaping the activity of figures such as Condoleezza Rice and

Hillary Clinton, which constituted significant barriers to their presidential ambitions in the post-9/11 period. Furthermore, the dissertation outlines the historical origins of gender imbalance in political processes, tracing the formation of stigma that has long surrounded female politicians, while also providing counterarguments to biological and psychological claims traditionally used to discredit women's political capacities. Finally, the dissertation highlights how the consequences of the September 11 attacks affected the women's participation in American politics, demonstrating how the entrenchment of "hegemonic masculinity" continues to structure political life in the United States today.

The practical significance of this dissertation lies in its potential applicability to further analyses of the role of masculinized discourse in shaping women's political participation. Additionally, the case study of September 11, 2001, can serve as a reference point for comparative research on militarized masculinity in other countries characterized by patriarchal political cultures and currently engaged in armed conflict. The example of United States in the post-9/11 the variability of political and social transformations that may follow military engagements, including the reinforcement of traditional values, the rise of post-traumatic stress syndrome among demobilized men as the result of the "militarized" masculinity discourse, and the resulting identity crisis in the peacetime. Finally, the conclusion of this study provides the hypothesis of the influence military conflicts have on the legitimacy of its political leader. Moreover, it can be applied for analyzing the effects of war and the absence of robust political opposition to contemporary militant and "protectors" regimes, which simultaneously pursue domestic policies aimed at consolidating personalistic "warrior-leader" rule, thereby reinforcing their claims to indefinite legitimacy.

While writing this dissertation, new research questions have emerged. One concerns the potential correlation between women's participation in security and defense policymaking and broader processes of demilitarization. Another relates to how existing "militarized" masculinity might be transformed by society into more heteronormative forms of masculinity, forms that do not require men to continuously validate their gender identity through demonstrations of military sacrifice for the homeland, nor compel women to adapt to rigid hierarchical relations by retreating into traditional roles as mothers and "keepers of the hearth".

“Women’s wars are not men’s wars”

(Cynthia Enloe)

“It is better to have ten years of negotiations than one day of war.”

(Andrei Gromyko)

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