

#21

SPRING

2023

—
3.00 €

The Progressive Post

WHEN FOREIGN POLICY MEETS FEMINISM

SPECIAL COVERAGE

When foreign policy meets feminism

DOSSIER

Is the centre-right still 'centre'?

FOCUS

Unbroken Ukraine: one year of war

DOSSIER

Can work be compatible with well-being?

Vasco Alves Cordeiro
Philippe Fargues
Daphne Halikiopoulou
Benedicta Lasi
Ann Linde
Jamilia Madeira
Tim Vlandas

...

www.progressivepost.eu

The Progressive Post

The Progressive Post is the political magazine of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). It gathers renowned thinkers, experts and activists from the world of politics, academia and civil society, provides critical analysis of policies, and clarifies options and opportunities for decision-makers.

Our ambition is to undertake intellectual reflection and debate for the benefit of the progressive movement, and to promote the founding principles of the European Union: freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy, human dignity, as well as respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

With a focus on EU politics, our crucial interest is the state and future of Social Democracy. We offer a platform (in print and online) for finding progressive answers to climate change, uneven development and social inequality in the European as well as global context. We invite our readers to explore with us the contradictions of our time and our authors to put forward arguments for peace, sustainability and social justice.

Stay in touch on progressivepost.eu and [@ProgPost_FEPS](https://twitter.com/ProgPost_FEPS)

FEPS
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES



PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

László Andor

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hedwig Giusto

DEPUTY EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Ainara Bascuñana, Olaf Bruns

EDITORIAL BOARD

László Andor (Chair), Ainara Bascuñana, Olaf Bruns, Elena Gil, Hedwig Giusto, David Rinaldi, Johan Robberecht, Ania Skrzypek

PROOFREADING

Nicky Robinson

COORDINATION & GRAPHIC DESIGN

Triptyque

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Peter Willems – Vec-Star

PHOTO CREDITS

© Shutterstock, © European Union, © UN Photos, © Ann Linde

COPYRIGHT

© FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies

N°21 - Spring 2023

ISSN 2506-7362

by Hedwig Giusto

The term 'feminist foreign policy' (FFP) is probably still unknown to most. It occupies a niche in the political debate at national, European and international levels. But it is increasingly gaining traction, particularly after the German red-green government announced at the beginning of March that it would adopt FFP. Germany has thus now joined the ranks of those states that have followed the pioneering example of Sweden (which launched FFP in 2014, only to abandon it last year, when the right-wing government took over).

The contours of FFP are nevertheless still blurred as there is no real consensus on its scope, goals or means. Moreover, the concept spawns strong resistance from those who scornfully dismiss it as naïve; and strong frustration from those who consider it only as window dressing and who point to the gap between rhetoric and actual implementation. In reality, this new political framework has been brought about at a time when feminism and gender policies more generally are being increasingly vilified by far-right actors.

While the political environment is objectively difficult – not least while a war is raging in Europe – the full potential of FFP is in fact disruptive. If understood in its broader sense, FFP aims not only to mainstream feminism and allow women into a field that has traditionally been the realm of elite men, looking at international affairs through a gender lens. FFP's spirit of inclusiveness goes beyond gender, and questions a political system that perpetuates inequalities and that tramples on human rights.

All these were reasons enough for the Progressive Post to endorse FFP and embrace the idea of a **Special Coverage** that tries to understand what happens when **Foreign policy meets feminism**. We asked what FFP

is or should be, without hiding the challenges and the criticism it meets – in particular, the risk that it comes to be considered as yet another attempt by the West to impose its vision on the Global South.

At the Progressive Post, we could not of course forget that a year has passed since the start of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, triggering a war whose end seems nowhere near imminent. In the **Focus Unbroken Ukraine: one year of war**, we look at the human cost of this war – because we know that a generation of Ukrainians has already been lost. We also look at how Ukraine is changing politically and invite the reader to think out of the box on the search for a path to peace, and to look beyond the war when it comes to devising the country's future reconstruction.

The first **Dossier, Is the centre-right still 'centre'?**, is dedicated to an analysis of what has traditionally been progressives' main competitor. We offer some interpretations of the internal dynamics of European centre-right parties as well as of the complex relationship they are establishing with the far right. We ask to what extent centre-right parties have changed compared to when they represented the political backbone of Europe after the second world war. We also investigate how dependent they have become on the far right's intellectual influence.

Finally, in the **Dossier Can work be compatible with well-being?** we explore the difficulties, particularly for women, of finding a good work-life balance and living good working lives. We look at this multifaceted issue from different perspectives – from the opaque concept of (women's) productivity, to the need to develop and implement a political agenda that delivers on job quality and that takes the care sector seriously.

Editorial



Hedwig Giusto,
Editor-in-chief



The Progressive Post

#21 Contents



CURRENT AFFAIRS

- 4** A war of the 20th century and challenges of the 21st
by Maria João Rodrigues
- 6** Europe in the jaws of history
by László Andor
- 10** Europe's socio-ecological transformation requires a very different industrial plan
by Isabelle Brachet
- 12** Beyond dependent market capitalism: why central and eastern Europe needs active industry and technology policies
by Ernst Hillebrand
- 14** Twenty years after the US invasion: did the war free Iraqis?
by Batool Alrefai
- 16** Population, migration and the preservation of our planet
by Philippe Fargues



SPECIAL COVERAGE

When foreign policy meets feminism

- 18** Why we need a feminist foreign policy
by Ann Linde
- 20** A feminist foreign policy in an era of global crisis: from policy to impact
by Benedicta Lasi
- 22** A feminist foreign policy? Redefining its meaning
by Serena Giusti



FOCUS

Unbroken Ukraine: one year of war

- 24** The cost of victory: coping with the prospect of Ukraine's 'lost generation'
by Andriy Korniychuk
- 26** Navigating time and shaping the future
by Victoria Vdovychenko
- 28** A tragic anniversary: one year into the Russo-Ukrainian war
by Stephen Eric Bronner
- 30** One year of war in Ukraine: solidarity starts locally
by Vasco Alves Cordeiro

 DOSSIER

Is the centre-right still 'centre'?

- 32** Fighting for equality rather than copying far-right populist positions on immigration
by Daphne Halikiopoulou and Tim Vlandas
- 36** Christian Democracy's crisis is bad for everyone – including the Left
by Fabio Wolkenstein
- 38** How Fidesz undermines Hungarian support for the EU
by András Biró-Nagy

Can work be compatible with well-being?

- 40** Job quality, the foundation of good working lives
by Agnès Parent-Thirion
- 44** One is not born (un)productive, one becomes so
by Laetitia Thissen
- 46** The domestic and home care sector: answering the structural weakness of care systems in the EU member states
by Aude Boisseuil

 INTERVIEW

- 48** Never be afraid of making mistakes
*Interview with Jamila Madeira
by Ania Skrzypek*

 LIBRARY

- 52** 200 years of enriching the few and failing the many
by Howard Reed
- 54** Green growth for good – can capitalism save the planet?
by Lucas Resende Carvalho





A war of the 20th century and challenges of the 21st

by Maria João Rodrigues

The terms of a peace solution in Ukraine remain highly uncertain, as does the timeframe needed to achieve them. They will certainly shape the time ahead, but this must not delay a stronger response to the challenges of the 21st century that we are now facing. Indeed, the outlook for 2023 clearly shows that we are entering a new historical era.

The brutal invasion of Ukraine by Putin's Russia has brought back the marks of the 20th century, with violent clashes between different political regimes and a self-perceived empire trying to expand its territory by military force, ignoring the basic rules of the global order. **The European Union's resolve to support Ukraine must be kept until a solution for peace is found that has strong guarantees for the Ukrainian side.** The terms and timeframe for such a solution remain highly uncertain, but it is sure they will shape the times ahead.

The commitment to support the Ukrainian war effort should not delay a stronger response to the challenges of the 21st century that are now confronting us. These challenges are new in their type because they are global in scale, and can only be tackled with much stronger international cooperation. They began with a global financial crisis from 2008 to 2012, then a pandemic from 2020 to 2022, all alongside an enduring climate crisis. All three crises have deepened the social inequalities within countries, between countries and between generations.

Despite many uncertainties and risks, **the outlook for 2023 clearly shows that we are entering a new historical era** which will deeply change every person's relationship with:

- the planet and nature, as limits will need to be respected according to principles of sustainability that are currently under discussion;
- the rest of humankind, as a global agora is emerging and new poles assert themselves, particularly those of China, India and the Global South;
- our current everyday reality, as our lives are being radically transformed by an expanding digital and virtual dimension.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it a unique and large-scale collective experience because the disease was generally perceived as a global, immediate and existential threat that required exceptional measures on all fronts: health, social, industrial, economic, financial and political.

These exceptional measures started defining an alternative to the neoliberal paradigm that had been dominant in policymaking for a significant part of the 20th century. Indeed, the so-called Washington Consensus is now being questioned on many fronts – including within the Bretton Woods institutions themselves – although a fully fledged alternative is still to be built and to become dominant.

► *The European Union's resolve to support Ukraine must be kept until a solution for peace is found that has strong guarantees for the Ukrainian side.*

Right now, we are at a historical junction regarding fundamental political alternatives. On the one hand, we are faced with a counter-reaction driven by populist leaders who claim



© tomertu / Shutterstock.com

that nationalistic retrenchment conducted by an authoritarian state is the best approach to meet people's concerns about jobs, living costs, health and security. On the other hand, we are faced with a progressive approach that is based on greater cooperation and solidarity, and on stronger intervention by a democratic state as well as by an updated multilateral system. This alternative still needs to undergo a full upgrade to rid it of influences from the previously dominant paradigm and to enable it to cope with new radical transformations, notably in the digital field.

At the international level, the defeat of US president Donald Trump by Joe Biden, and more recently the defeat of Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, raise new hopes for the second alternative – the progressive approach – to take the upper hand. However, there are also other authoritarian poles in the world. And **the risk of a new cold war is increasing, particularly if China becomes more aligned with Russia**. What is more, this kind of alignment is also taking place inside the European Union, especially when conservative forces make governing alliances with forces from the more extreme right. A big dispute will take place in the upcoming European elections but in the meantime urgent actions are needed and many choices can already be made by the current constellation of European actors, including the EU presidencies of the Council.

It is now high time for the European Union to make bolder choices:

- in its relationship with the world, when dealing with Putin's confrontation and multiple pressures, when strengthening its strategic autonomy in energy, food, industrial and digital capacities as well as in security and defence, and also when developing alliances across the world to build up new multilateral solutions to global challenges, notably those of climate change, poverty and achieving sustainable development goals;
- to bring about a real energy union providing a transcontinental grid with secure, affordable and green solutions;
- to bring about a transcontinental digital infrastructure with broadband and platforms providing general services, and with AI aligned with European values in key data spaces, notably in energy management, security, research, health and education;
- to support these long-term strategic investments with a stronger budgetary capacity at all levels, including a European capacity, by issuing European debt based on own resources;
- to tame the rising costs of energy for SMEs and vulnerable households, with a coordinated approach to regulate the markets, including capped prices and European joint procurement;

► *The risk of a new cold war increases, particularly if China becomes more aligned with Russia.*

- to deepen a sense of European citizenship, in social terms by fully implementing the European pillar of social rights and, in political terms by developing European democracy through strengthening its representative and participatory features;
- to step up the enlargement process with a new approach to better integrate the candidate countries into all EU networks;
- to update the EU decision-making system in order to decide and act more effectively and with more democracy, including gender equality and youth involvement at all levels.

The current Swedish Presidency of the EU Council has shown a worryingly low level of ambition in its priorities. **It will be up to the upcoming Spanish and Belgian presidencies to shift the direction and raise the ambition to a higher level.**



Maria João Rodrigues,
FEPS President



Europe in the jaws of history

by László Andor

The Russian aggression against Ukraine with its manifold consequences has determined politics and life in Europe since early 2022. From the point of view of country size, Europe's largest country invaded the second largest one. The effects have been not only European, but global. It is primarily the population of Ukraine that suffers incredibly from Vladimir Putin's war, but the indirect effects have been felt worldwide in the forms of sky-rocketing food and energy prices, deepening financial crises as well as heightened geopolitical tensions.

It is very difficult to count the negative effects on Europe, and it takes some time to come to terms with some of the long-term implications. Nevertheless, after the initial shock one year ago, European leaders started to see more clearly the global ramifications of this tragic clash between two Slavic nations and the potential further escalation of their conflict. European solidarity with Ukraine – in military, as well as humanitarian sense – has been remarkable, but it remains a challenge to reconcile the open-ended war effort with the economic interests of the EU itself. For years, the European Union has been working on the concept, and the policy, of strategic autonomy. This dossier suddenly disappeared in a deep drawer in February 2022. Europe suddenly switched to security mode which also meant following the leadership of the US.

The European strategy in response to the Russian invasion has aimed at encouraging Ukraine

and mobilising Western support, but it has not come without risks. **In order to provide moral support to Ukraine's war effort, EU leaders started to overstate the chances of Ukraine joining the European Union.** They used bogus language (for example about Ukraine belonging to the European family) to make Ukrainians believe that somehow their country could naturally fit in the EU structures as we know them today. When speaking publicly with Ukrainian politicians about the chances of EU accession, the populist narratives suggesting that the speed of EU accession depends on the bureaucratic performance in Brussels, and not on the country in question matching EU standards and rules, frequently popped up, without being rebutted by EU officials.

At the same time, when speaking to the EU citizens, EU leaders constantly downplayed the expected costs of economic warfare. No wonder many Europeans were disappointed

when the sanctions imposed on Russia were not helping to force the aggressor to end its campaign and leave Ukraine alone, and even more when the continent was sliding towards economic recession and started to face a long-term decrease in growth potential and living standards.

► *To provide moral support to Ukraine's war effort, EU leaders started to overstate the chances of Ukraine joining the European Union.*

Europe ended the year 2022 remarkably united in unwavering support for Ukraine, a new financial aid package was even adopted, together with another round of sanctions



© Sebastian Casteller / Shutterstock.com

against Russian officials, as well as business and media persons. On the other hand, **European views remained diverse regarding expectations about how the war should end, what kind of post-war security architecture should be built, and how much room would remain for restarting economic cooperation with Russia, once this war is over.**

It is therefore quite remarkable that even without a coherent all-European view about the future, a new continental organisation was launched on 6 October: the European Political Community (EPC). Though surrounded with a high degree of scepticism, the EPC offers a broad framework to include the UK as well as potential future members of the EU. For sure, the EPC would need to be further developed to prove its added value and its potential to help members fulfil their ambitions for peace, justice, and sustainable prosperity. But as a first act, it is an important one to start the

construction of order when much of the daily action is still tied down by the ongoing war, and by the efforts to deal with its immediate consequences.

Moving towards a new political architecture in Europe while the war is still raging is particularly important as support for Ukraine's defensive effort is often claimed to be contradictory to the equally important desire for peace. Peace is almost always built on compromise, and nobody wants to compromise with an aggressor. Efforts to maintain peace through negotiations are often condemned as appeasement.

This should, however, not be the only approach. Everyone observing the conflicts in Eastern Europe should learn more about how we ended up in this tragic situation and form an opinion on the limitations of military solutions and the conditions of coexistence and lasting peace.

One must see that war can be a way to deal with a conflict if no other way can be found, but it cannot be a goal. On the other hand, peace can be a goal and the more destruction we experience, the harder we must work to find a way out, first through de-escalation, then with a ceasefire and eventually peace.

► *European views remained diverse regarding expectations about how the war should end, what kind of post-war security architecture should be built, and how much room would remain for restarting economic cooperation with Russia, once this war is over.*



When the Russian government, after one year of military build-up and many rounds of fruitless negotiations with the Biden administration decided to launch a brutal invasion, the European response was firm, thanks primarily to the *Zeitenwende*, or turning point, announced by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. This decisiveness has been tested at every stage of the war, and it remains vital in 2023 as well, when new offensives are expected, following the partial mobilisation on the Russian side, and the new deliveries of heavy weapons to Ukraine.

► *One must see that war can be a way to deal with a conflict if no other way can be found, but it cannot be a goal. On the other hand, peace can be a goal and the more destruction we experience, the harder we must work to find a way out.*

Finally, we should also pay attention to how the war has influenced the political landscape of Europe. The European centre-left had made progress at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic because there was a wider understanding in societies about the need for solidarity. But **the war brought back nationalist sentiments, and often jingoism and militaristic frenzy, which is always challenging for progressives.** Unsurprisingly, the Centre-left suffered a string of setbacks in national elections in Hungary, France, Sweden, Italy and also Israel.

So far, Social Democrats have not been rewarded for fighting at the vanguard of solidarity with Ukraine, and for mobilising all possible humanitarian, economic and military support. Without this progressive contribution, EU member states

could not have remained so united, in this year of horror, in support of Ukraine's defensive war effort and also the millions of refugees. At the same time, Social Democrats have distinguished themselves in this difficult struggle by going beyond the necessary international solidarity and reconciling it with two further objectives: the fair distribution of the costs of war within our societies, and the avoidance of unnecessary escalation and simultaneous preparation for peace and reconstruction instead. No other political force seems to be concerned with this broader responsibility, which remains a distinctive characteristic of the progressive political forces. When the time comes, the wider electorate will surely recognise this.

This article is based on a larger contribution by László Andor to the FEPS Progressive Yearbook 2023.



László Andor,
FEPS Secretary General

One year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine



A year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, FEPS paid tribute to the defenders of Ukrainian independence and highlighted the EU efforts of solidarity and preparations for reconstruction.

The Russian aggression was a shock for all of Europe. At FEPS, we promptly turned our attention and energy to the war and its potential short- and long-term consequences.

Find out all FEPS work, since February 2022, on the war and its various implications for European politics and security architecture. Stay tuned for forthcoming action.





Europe's socio-ecological transformation requires a very different industrial plan

by Isabelle Brachet

Today's reality can increasingly be described as a polycrisis: the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent disruption of global supply chains; the war in Ukraine and the resulting fossil fuel price crisis; rising inequalities between and within countries, exacerbated by inflation; and, of course, climate change. We need to transform our economy to make it resilient to these shocks and respectful of planetary boundaries, and we need to reduce inequalities. The Green Deal Industrial Plan must be part of this socio-ecological transformation rather than a plan that mostly, and blindly, funds the industry.

Adopted in February 2023 to respond to the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the Green Deal Industrial Plan (GDIP) is a large investment plan for energy and climate action, and is framed as an attempt to make Europe's clean tech and green industry competitive. As part of the GDIP, the European Commission has proposed upcoming legislation on critical raw materials and on a net-zero industry, as well as financial support to green industries.

However, it is important to take a step back and question some of the underlying assumptions behind these proposals. In doing so it can be seen that it is essential to boost the production of clean technologies in Europe as they are indispensable for decarbonising and transforming our economy. This boost in production of clean technologies will help reduce our dependence on imports that are exposed to disruptions (as happened during

the pandemic) and to geopolitical turmoil (from the war in Ukraine to the China-US trade war). **It is also essential for Europe to accelerate the transformation of its industry so that it significantly reduces its greenhouse gas emissions, as well as its appetite for material resources (raw materials, water, energy).** The latter – which we call a 'sufficiency agenda' – is unfortunately completely absent from the GDIP.

Transforming our industry will require a careful mix of regulation and funding – not just the provision of public funds and subsidies for industries. Indeed, it is crucial to change regulation in order to change industrial practices. For example, regulation is needed to shift private finance towards genuinely green activities, in turn reducing the need for extensive public subsidies. Eco-design regulations are needed to ensure products are designed with the recycling, reuse and life extension of the products in mind.

Ensuring a favourable environment for a circular economy requires a mix of targeted tax measures, recycling obligations, or bans on programmed obsolescence. **Regulation is also needed to adopt binding reduction targets for the use of material resources; to ban the use of highly polluting and socially harmful luxury items such as SUVs or private jets;** and to make investors and corporations accountable for their climate impacts. In addition, the long overdue phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies is needed to enhance the relative competitiveness of clean economy sectors, starting with a ban on the free allocation of pollution certificates to specific industries in the Emissions Trading System.

Additional public finance will clearly be needed to fund the socio-ecological transition, and the transformation of our economy and energy systems in particular. The Commission is therefore making three proposals as part of the GDIP:

firstly, a reshuffling of existing EU funding streams, secondly, a relaxation of state aid rules, and thirdly, a new EU fund (a sovereignty fund).. Most of the funding gaps will have to be met by private finance. However, public finance has a crucial role to play when there is a lack of private funding – in other words when the activity is seen as generating too slow or too low returns, or when it is considered too risky. Public finance also has a role to play in upholding social justice in the transition, ensuring that the cost of the transition is shared fairly in society, and that everyone can embark on the journey. The focus must be on how and where public finance is used.



© Bilanol / Shutterstock.com

Large companies who are making profits – sometimes record or windfall profits – and distributing large dividends, could instead reinvest part of these profits in greening their operations and in innovation. They can also access finance on the capital market of course (no market failure). This is not how public finance should be used. Instead, by tackling market failures and sectors with insufficient private funding, public finance can and should provide effective support to various segments of the clean technologies industry, particularly to SMEs.

The GDIP includes a proposal to temporarily relax state aid rules (to make it easier for member states to subsidise their industries). **The aim of the proposal is to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy and the decarbonisation of industry. Such a change could have been key in stopping the current practice of allocating massive subsidies to carbon-intensive industries without any safeguards to ensure the subsidies deliver on social and environmental objectives.** To make this change, the Commission should subject the approval of state aid to environmental protection requirements across the board for all state aid schemes. This, however, is not in the Commission's current GDIP proposal, which means that this reform may end up harming the climate and the environment rather than protecting them.

As mentioned earlier, **the GDIP also considers the establishment of a new European sovereignty fund. This would provide resources to member states that do not have the fiscal capacity to subsidise their green and clean tech industries through state aid.** The sovereignty fund would therefore ensure a level playing field between EU countries. While we need a long-term EU investment plan for climate change and a just transition with a new bond issuance programme, the sovereignty fund in its proposed form is not what we need or want. **Its scope is narrow and one-sided: it would only finance industry (supply-side), and not households (demand-side). It also seems that no resources would be dedicated to supporting investment in the public sector infrastructure (such as public transport, the electricity grid, and public services like education) which would nevertheless be the only way to make the transition socially just and inclusive.** In addition, we need robust requirements for social and environmental conditionality for any additional public funds going to industry. **Taxpayers need to obtain social and environmental returns from the companies receiving the subsidies.**

The environmental conditionality should include uncompromised, science-based criteria to prevent doing harm to the climate and environment (the so-called 'do-no-significant-harm' criteria). And additional funding should not be

made available under any circumstances for fossil gas, nuclear or hydrogen which is not produced with renewables. Conditions should also include gender equality in the operations of sovereignty fund recipients, as well as respect for collective bargaining, the participation of workers as shareholders so as to move towards alternative business models, a ban on dividend payments while a company is receiving state aid, and a requirement for a portion of the profits to be distributed to workers while another portion be reinvested in greening the company's operations.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the fossil fuel price crises have shown that we need strong public policies and investment in order to steer the economy and protect society. And a redistributive agenda must be at the core of our approach. The GDIP is an opportunity to advance this agenda, but we need to get it right.



*Isabelle Brachet,
fiscal reform policy
coordinator at Climate
Action Network (CAN)
Europe since 2021*



Beyond dependent market capitalism: why central and eastern Europe needs active industry and technology policies

by Ernst Hillebrand

The eastern member states of the EU have seen impressive economic growth since joining the European Union. This is especially true for the Visegrád countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), but also, for example, for Slovenia, Romania or Lithuania. In almost all the 'accession countries', the economic development was far better than predicted (or feared) at the time of EU accession.

The basis of this success was the integration of central and eastern Europe into the industrial division of labour in Europe. The countries of the region assumed an important role in industrial subcontracting and manufacturing for international corporations, many of them from Germany. Today, Germany's combined trade with the four Visegrád states is greater than its trade with any other economic partner, be it China, France or the US. A longstanding industrial tradition, low wages combined with a relatively high level of skills and education, good investment conditions and geographical proximity to the markets of western Europe were important success factors. Today, the economies of central and eastern Europe are highly industrialised 'factory economies' that are functioning in a symbiotic relationship with the 'headquarter economies' of the 'old' EU15.

However, this success story has had its price: **the economies of the region are now**

characterised by a large share of foreign ownership, and a high resource and CO2 intensity of value creation. Analysts of capitalism have created their own category for this type of economy: they have labelled it as 'dependent market capitalism', characterised by a high degree of control by foreign capital in both the production and financial sectors, a functionally subordinate role of domestic enterprises and a concentration on production functions with little influence on the decision making of the big firms that are active in these countries. Furthermore, technological sovereignty and capacities are very limited. According to a recent study by the European Commission, only six of the 200 companies with the highest research and development expenditures in Europe are based in the accession countries.

After two decades of dynamic development, this 'dependent' growth model is now slowly

running out of steam. The convergence with the industrial core economies in the EU is stagnating. True, the Visegrád countries have caught up with the Mediterranean EU countries. But **compared to the leading 'headquarter economies' such as Germany, the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries, the gap in per capita income has not been shrinking for years now.**

► *Compared to the leading 'headquarter economies' such as Germany, the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries, the gap in per capita income has not been shrinking for years now.*



© VIZ UALNI / Shutterstock.com

In order to change this situation and move further towards the levels and standards of living of their western and northern neighbours, the countries of central and eastern Europe must find a new growth model. In the 21st century, the capacity to create and use technological innovation is becoming ever more important for the economic performance of enterprises and countries. The countries of central and eastern Europe must therefore try to attract more knowledge- and

► *The countries of central and eastern Europe must begin to build up their own innovation systems and shift to a more know-how-driven growth model focusing on domestic enterprises that operate at the cutting edge of technological innovation.*

know-how-intensive parts of the production process. And, even more importantly, they need to start harnessing their own 'ecosystem' of innovative domestic companies.

To follow this path, central and eastern Europe must pursue an active industrial and innovation policy much more intensively than in the past, when the impulses for innovation and technological modernisation were essentially set by the foreign direct investment of western corporations and companies. **The countries of central and eastern Europe must now begin to build up their own innovation systems and shift to a more know-how-driven growth model focusing on domestic enterprises that operate at the cutting edge of technological innovation.**

Under the rules of the internal market and the EU competition regime, this will be a challenging task. Investment in the education and training system, in automation, innovation and start-up support will play a crucial role here. It is only in

this way that the countries of central and eastern Europe will succeed in closing the existing gap in terms of productivity and per capita income.

The centre-left parties of the region would be well advised to commit to this process. It is the only way to satisfy the legitimate aspiration of the citizens of central and eastern Europe to catch up with the west and finally realise the promise of socio-economic convergence within the EU. If the centre-left parties do not do so, other political actors soon will.

Ernst Hillebrand is head of the 'European Economies of the East' programme at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Budapest





Twenty years after the US invasion: did the war free Iraqis?

by Batool Alrefai

Twenty years after the US invaded Iraq, aiming, publicly, to bring Iraqis democracy and peace, the country continues to face an unpredictable economic, political and security environment – which demonstrates the urgency for a new inclusive long-term strategy with clear follow-up steps.

In March 2003, the United States went to war in Iraq with a clear aim: "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people", as US President George Bush said back at the time. Later that month, an intensive air and ground military campaign led to the fall of Baghdad and to that of Saddam's Ba'athist regime. Twenty years later, between 275,000 and 306,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed by direct violence since the beginning of the US invasion, according to the Costs of War Project's figures. Iraq is still torn between the United States and Iran, with many militias, most of them linked to the Mahdi Army, also known as the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM).

These **20 years of violence, together with the overall unpredictable political, economic and security environment, have deeply affected the socioeconomic situation of Iraq.** Corruption is endemic, with Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2022 ranking Iraq in the 157th position out of 180 countries. A new era of tension between the central government in Baghdad and the autonomous Kurdish region has been sparked, notably by the question of

oil exports. In addition, Iraq's security remains subject to regional tensions, with powerful countries considering Iraq as a battlefield for their skirmishes.

► *Twenty years of violence, together with the overall unpredictable political, economic and security environment, have deeply affected the socioeconomic situation of Iraq.*

Iraq's economy is highly undiversified, as it relies heavily – and almost exclusively – on oil revenues. In 2022, oil revenues exceeded €115 billion, according to preliminary figures announced by the Iraqi oil ministry on TV, which makes oil production account for 90 per cent of Baghdad's revenues. **This means that any fluctuation in the global price of oil directly and immediately affects Iraq's economy, as it did in March and April 2020 when the prices of oil collapsed due to the**

spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, even when oil prices are high, it does not translate into an improved socio-economic situation for Iraqi citizens. Indeed, unemployment remains high: according to the national Labour Force Survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO), published in July 2022, the unemployment rate stood at 16.5 per cent. The female unemployment rate (28.2 per cent) was about twice the male unemployment rate (14.7 per cent), and the youth unemployment rate (35.8 per cent) was more than three times that of the adult unemployment rate (11.2 per cent).

Iraq's politics since 2003 has been chaotic, unstable and volatile, with a political system based on the Muhasasa – the ethno-sectarian apportionment system which leaves little space for non-ethno-sectarian political bodies to engage in politics. The Muhasasa system was developed in the early 1990s to divide political positions between Shias, Kurds and Sunnis in order to secure representation for these groups in Iraq's government. As a result, power and influence have been centred in the hands of elites who largely focus on gaining and maintaining power for their own benefit, rather than improving governance.

For a long time now, Iraqi people have been frustrated with the quality of public services and the high levels of corruption and unemployment.

Data from the Arab Barometer opinion survey of September 2022 show that just 29 per cent are satisfied with the quality of public services. Equally, around 29 per cent are satisfied with healthcare and 23 per cent with the educational system. In October 2019, young Iraqis led a nationwide protest movement against bad governance and the endemic corruption of the governing elite. Protesters called for security, basic services (such as water, electricity and solid waste management), jobs, and less foreign interference in Iraq.

► *A glimmer of hope can be found among the young people, who account for at least 40 per cent of Iraq's population, according to the latest estimates by the Iraqi ministry of planning in 2022.*

As the country observes the 20th anniversary of the invasion, **a glimmer of hope can be found among the young people, who account for at least 40 per cent of Iraq's population according to the latest estimates by the Iraqi ministry of planning in 2022.** Clientelist structures in Iraq have led to the strength of ethno-sectarian groups at the expense of official institutions, thus allowing these groups to control the state's resources. **There is a need to create an inclusive decision-making model in Iraq, where non-ethno-sectarian groups, women, young people and minorities are part of the decision-making process.**

"Tackling corruption in Iraq is key to encouraging investment and restoring public faith in the political process" said Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani during the Munich Security Conference in February 2023. Tackling corruption in Iraq should move beyond the traditional techniques and look further into the causes that feed this corruption – causes such as the bureaucracy of government processes. It is important to look at improving the legal framework, building the

capacity and the relevant skills for corruption investigation bodies, and increasing the transparency and public accountability of all governmental institutions and the parliament.

As mentioned earlier, the economy is a pressing priority for Iraq. Recently, the Iraqi government approved the federal budget for 2023. However, the budget is not designed to improve the infrastructure or create sustainable jobs. Instead, it just covers the state's operating expenses – again pointing to the urgent need for economic diversification. In 2020, Iraq adopted a *White Paper for Economic Reform*, which aims to allow the state to take appropriate steps to develop a diversified, dynamic economy in the future. **Iraq could look into many potential solutions, from playing a role as a transit hub between Europe and Asia, to paying more attention to the agriculture sector's vital role in increasing Iraq's revenues.** However, Iraq's government needs to be supported in creating effective long-term follow-up mechanisms because, while reforms such as the White Paper receive more attention during times of crises, they are all too easily forgotten when life becomes more stable.

It is therefore time for Iraq to start looking beyond its past and to consider that there is a new generation who has not witnessed the Ba'ath regime. Their awareness and openness have grown, and most likely they won't take sectarian differences as seriously as their predecessors. Will the country be able to be a home for them? This question needs a clear long-term strategy to respond to.



© Ahmed Dhiaa Jaafar / Shutterstock.com

*Batool Alrefai,
Programme Manager,
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Amman, FES Iraq,
manages the foundation's
programmes in Iraq*





Population, migration and the preservation of our planet

by Philippe Fargues

On 15 November, the United Nations' estimates of world population passed the 8-billion milestone. On that day, baby girl Vinice Mabansa, born in a maternity hospital of Manila, was designated as the eight billionth person on Earth. The choice of one of the Global South's busiest cities and the capital of the Philippines, a prominent origin state of migrants, was symbolic and should have offered an opportunity to raise awareness on how migration helps humanity to meet the challenge of keeping our planet inhabitable.

It took 300,000 years for Homo Sapiens to reach one billion individuals at the beginning of the 19th century, after which every additional billion took less time than the previous. The most recent increase, from 7 billion in 2011 to 8 billion in 2022, was the fastest. By virtue of the demographic momentum – which is a delayed response of population growth to changes in fertility – it will take a long time for the population to reach a plateau. According to the United Nations, this will not happen before 2086, when the world's population reaches 10.4 billion – unless unforeseen factors linked to climate change (or to war) defeat these projections.

Such amazing growth must be credited to the genius of mankind, who invented science and social organisation to disseminate its marvels. Life expectancy now extends beyond limits that were unthinkable a mere generation ago. But is this enough reason to celebrate? Population growth is a victory against immemorial perils of hunger and disease, but at the same time it is the most overwhelming threat to our presence

on Earth. Paradoxically, lengthening individuals' lifespan – thereby increasing their total number unless fertility falls below reproduction level – generates a high risk of precipitating the advent of an era when life on this planet will no longer be possible for our species.

► *Population growth is a victory against immemorial perils of hunger and disease, but at the same time it is the most overwhelming threat to our presence on Earth.*

Indeed, the way human beings produce, trade, and consume causes several negative and irreversible effects, from depleting non-renewable resources to global warming. So far,

the development of human well-being on a large scale – a highly suitable goal – has failed to avoid these undesirable outcomes. The equation is simple: in the current state of technology, the quantity of adverse effects is directly proportionate to the total number of individuals and their average standards of living. **If rising standards is the goal, then decreasing the population is the only way to prevent the defeat of another pressing goal: preserving the Earth's capacity to support the human population. Social scientists or politicians who pretend otherwise are blind or liars.**

Not only is our planet limited in terms of non-renewable resources, but it reacts to the way we behave. Environmental scenarios warn against manmade disruptions that could suddenly spring into action. Rising air temperatures could render large areas of land uninhabitable, and rising water levels could disable harbour facilities around the world, hampering the maritime commerce that has become indispensable to our very existence. The time has arrived for

- *Europe, an undeniable frontrunner in the race to demographic degrowth, has benefitted from large inflows of migrants to rejuvenate its declining and ageing workforce.*



© Varavin88 / Shutterstock.com

demographic projections to consider climate scenarios. As climatologists map the future of territories, demographers should no longer take the inhabitable land of each nation as acquired data forever.

The time has also come to advocate demographic degrowth. Countries are unequally advanced in the race for decreasing population numbers and the good news is that those whose numbers grow fastest are those who do less harm to the Earth. From 2022 to 2086, the UN predicts that middle-, low- and lower-income regions will together gain 2,585 million inhabitants while the more developed regions will lose 96 million. According to Eurostat, if immigration stops, the total population of the EU will drop from 446 million in 2020 to 291 million in 2100. The bloc would lose 180 million individuals under 77 years, but gain 25 million above that age.

Positive or negative, population growth has a price. On one side, rapid population growth calls for demographic investments, which are expenditures necessary to maintain the living conditions of a growing number of people, as opposed to economic, social, or cultural investments to improve their well-being. Conversely, negative population growth and rapid ageing challenge the contract of generations and

pension systems, and possibly economic performance because of skills ageing. There are labour market issues in both cases, high unemployment and underemployment in the developing world, and labour shortages in the most advanced economies.

This is where international migration comes into play to meet the challenges ahead. It links nations characterised by complementary imbalances: by labour surpluses vs deficits in the case of economic migration, and by despotic or failed states vs rule-of-law in the case of refugee movements. **Europe, an undeniable frontrunner in the race to demographic degrowth, has benefitted from large inflows of migrants to rejuvenate its declining and ageing workforce.** In the Philippines (and many developing countries), millions are gaining education and openness to the world thanks to an expatriate mother, father or brother. Moreover, the international migration of people, which is mainly from high to low birth rate nations, might precipitate the advent of an era of population degrowth. In other terms, it could help increase people's well-being while reducing their number and subsequent pressure on earth.

There is no doubt that migration will continue, given that it brings enormous benefits to individuals and societies, in the countries

of origin and those of destination, as well as security to the world. While in December 2022, Western media were busy condemning human rights deficiencies in the host country of the World Football Cup, a nation employing millions of migrant workers, the EU and several of its member states were silently preparing reforms to limit immigration and asylum drastically. And yet, unprecedented inflows of people fleeing war at our external border should be an occasion for the EU to go beyond its inward-looking New Pact on Migration and Asylum (2020), and to launch a truly global, visionary initiative on population, migration and the preservation of our planet.



*Philippe Fargues,
Fellow at the European
University Institute
(Florence, Italy)*



Why we need a feminist foreign policy

by Ann Linde

Under a Social Democratic-led government Sweden was the first country to pursue a feminist foreign policy. Between 2014-2022, the Swedish government systematically analysed what decisions would mean for women and girls, using the 'three Rs': rights, representation and resources. Although the new Swedish right-wing government decided to abolish this policy, several countries with different political colours have now followed the Swedish example. The many positive results should make the call for a feminist foreign policy a priority for progressives.

We are living in times of crises. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is of course on all our minds, and a year and a half has now passed since the Taliban took control in Afghanistan, where the situation for women and girls is absolutely horrific. Brave women in Iran have protested against a misogynist regime, many of them paying a heavy price with prison, torture and even death. The climate and environmental crisis threatens our planet and its inhabitants, disproportionately affecting women and girls.

Common to all these conflicts and crises is that women, girls and marginalised individuals – due to historical and structural inequalities – are hit the hardest. **When half of the population still does not enjoy the same rights, representation and resources as the other half, there is a need to adopt a gender lens for foreign policy.**

One of the most important elements in pursuing a feminist foreign policy is that it must be done systematically. It is not just a 'gender ad hoc thing you need to remember'.

And a feminist approach is not only about a perspective. It is a way of analysing and developing policy and operational responses to the challenges we face today. It contributes to a sustainable and peaceful development and future. And it helps us become a counterbalance to the actors pushing back against gender equality in different contexts and arenas.

An effective tool to use in pursuing a feminist foreign policy is that of the 'three Rs': rights, representation and resources.

► *When half of the population still does not enjoy the same rights, representation and resources as the other half, there is a need to adopt a gender lens for foreign policy.*

Rights: the simple fact is that human rights are also women's rights. Here, two fundamental tracks must be followed when pursuing a feminist foreign policy. Firstly, there are areas where we must aim for prohibition, such as gender-based discrimination, forced marriages and female genital mutilation. Secondly, there are areas where the aim is progress – for example equal rights to inheritance and access to education and health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. These areas are key to women's empowerment.

Representation: all individuals must have the same right to participation, education and influence in decision-making processes. Women are chronically underrepresented at key forums where decisions are made. This goes for all areas, be it in peace negotiations, on company boards or in political parties.

Resources: resources need to be allocated to promote equal opportunities. This means that we should identify and promote targeted measures – for example, measures

strengthening gender mainstreaming in the management of grants, and measures pursuing diversity-responsive budgeting.

In my experience after nearly seven years as Sweden's minister for trade, minister for EU affairs, and most recently minister for foreign affairs in Social Democratic-led governments, a feminist lens transforms our view of the world. I have witnessed first-hand the importance of this agenda on the ground in many conflict areas, including in Ukraine and the Caucasus. The horrific reports of sexual assault and rape currently being perpetrated by the Russian armed forces are a tragic reminder of why a feminist perspective is always needed.

Sweden systematically applied a feminist foreign policy during our time in the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2017-2018, and also when I was Chairperson in Office in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021 – to name just two examples. In the UNSC we consistently sought to ensure that the Council included a focus on women, peace and security (WPS) in all discussions and decisions. We therefore pushed for the UNSC to be briefed by civil society representatives, and for WPS to be discussed in each and every country file. We also showed that it was indeed possible to achieve gender balance among those briefing the Council during Sweden's Presidency in July 2018, and I am now happy to see how several members have taken this approach on board today. Furthermore, we also insisted that briefings to the UNSC encompass a gender perspective, including information on the role of women in the peace processes under discussion. That consistent request had an impact on what the Secretariat prepared. And that is the point: not having to ask.

In a similar way, I also sought to integrate WPS into all dimensions of our meetings when I was Chairperson in Office in the OSCE. I therefore brought the situation for women and girls to all my meetings, and I consulted with women's organisations during my visits to



© Ann Linde

different regions, including to Central Asia, Russia and Ukraine. The OSCE special envoys to conflicts were asked to look especially at how to increase women's participation in peace processes. I appointed a special representative for gender and an advisory group on gender to support the OSCE.

► *A feminist approach is not only about a perspective. It is a way of analysing and developing policy and operational responses to the challenges we face today.*

In 2014, Sweden became the first country in the world to declare a feminist foreign policy and to establish a new standard that several countries have since followed. Nine countries in Europe, Latin America and Canada currently pursue a feminist foreign policy, and several are on the way to doing so, including in Africa. Gender equality is a fundamental

prerequisite for achieving all foreign policy goals. Sustainable peace and security, and the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved if we exclude half of the world's population. Since introducing our feminist foreign policy, many more leaders now agree on the importance of applying a systematic gender perspective to foreign policy. I am therefore very disappointed that one of the first decisions of the new right-wing government in Sweden, with the support of a xenophobic and nationalistic party, was to no longer pursue a feminist foreign policy. It is my sincere hope that more countries will follow the Swedish Social Democratic-led government's example of implementing a feminist foreign policy. As progressives, we should lead the movement to make this happen.

*Ann Linde,
former Minister for
Foreign Affairs of Sweden.
She has a long experience
in Sweden's Social
Democratic Party*





A feminist foreign policy in an era of global crisis: from policy to impact

by **Benedicta Lasi**

Many countries have adopted various forms of feminist foreign policies over the past decade: Sweden, Canada, France, Luxembourg, Mexico, Spain, Libya, Germany and Chile. And with the growing interest of other countries in adopting similar policies, it is imperative to assess the importance of feminist foreign policy and its potentially transformative impact on women's rights and human rights around the world.

As governments around the world gradually adopt the emerging concept of feminist foreign policy, we must examine the impact such a foreign policy framework can have on achieving its international development aims. We must challenge countries adopting a feminist foreign policy to rethink their approach to policy design and implementation. This is particularly critical because, while a feminist foreign policy is aimed at ensuring that women's rights are prioritised in developing foreign policy responses to development issues globally, **the societies where the impact of a feminist foreign policy is needed the most are the very societies where the policy is likely to face pushbacks in its implementation.** Additionally, given that there are different ways of adopting and implementing policies, countries adopting a feminist foreign policy must develop robust frameworks to guarantee the desired outcomes and ensure sustainable impact.

Feminist foreign policy as a concept for fostering women's rights and human rights

globally has the potential to transform societies through well-thought-out policies, consultations, and cooperation between multiple stakeholders to advance more inclusive and equitable societies. It aims to create gender awareness and pursue a gender-sensitive foreign policy approach toward international relations and development.

Given that the concept of feminist foreign policy is at its nascent phase of development with several countries adopting various strategies for implementation, critics may argue that until such a time when the concept of feminist foreign policy is comprehensively developed to encompass multiple aspects of foreign affairs and is thus institutionalised, it will fall short of having a real impact on women's rights in a sustainable manner. However, I consider that it is premature to call for a universal approach to impact assessment based on the level of institutionalisation of the various forms of the policy adopted by different countries. Although there has been significant progress in the

institutionalisation of equality and the protection of women's rights in certain parts of the world, the concept of feminist foreign policy is still evolving, with different dimensions to its design and implementation.

WHAT IMPACT CAN IT MAKE IN THE WORLD TODAY?

The main tenets of a feminist foreign policy as a progressive approach to foreign policy is that it challenges the traditional responses to issues such as women's rights, conflict prevention and resolution, trade and development cooperation. Through the concerted efforts of governments, **feminist foreign policy can therefore ensure the promotion of various gender-sensitive policies around the world.** But to achieve any concrete results, a feminist foreign policy must set women's rights and human rights as key priority areas in international cooperation and development.



© pcruciatti / Shutterstock.com

Recent developments on women's rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran have seen the regime of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei further undermine the rights and liberties of women through the violent implementation of a mandatory hijab law by the regime's 'morality police'. The arrest, torture and subsequent death of 22-year-old Iranian Mahsa Almini in 2022 highlighted the plights of Iranian women and the need for international solidarity in their fight for fundamental freedoms. We have also witnessed women's right to education being stripped away in Afghanistan, where the Taliban regime imposed strict restrictions in December 2022 that ban women from attaining education in universities and from working in non-governmental organisations. The Taliban regime also mandates compulsory face covering, and has implemented gender segregation policies in public spaces. **These policies have rolled back several years of progress in the fight for women's rights and freedoms in both Iran and Afghanistan.**

Although the two regimes have accused Western countries of attempting to impose foreign cultures on their citizens and have consequently restricted the inflow of humanitarian assistance that is intended to support women and activists, the result has been significant international solidarity from several countries – which have either offered humanitarian assistance to

victims or imposed sanctions on the regimes. These situations highlight the importance of feminist foreign policy and the impact it can make globally on the enforcement of sanctions against regimes that perpetuate such violations against the rights of women.

Another area on which a feminist foreign policy can have a significant impact is the continuous violation of the rights and dignity of women and girls through female genital mutilation and through early and forced marriages, which have resulted for many years in the systematic abuse of women's rights in several countries around the world. Today an estimated 120 million girls and women around the world are reported to have undergone female genital mutilation, and deaths from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth are still on the rise. **Through coordinated efforts, a feminist foreign policy can work with governments to eradicate such discriminatory social norms and harmful gender-based violence** and ensure more equal social structures and the protection of women's and human rights.

Yet while the adoption of feminist foreign policy is necessary, it is not sufficient in itself. Underpinning the idea that feminist foreign policies can make a difference in the promotion and protection of women's rights is the question of

approach. Indeed, a successful feminist foreign policy must be well-designed and responsive. For feminist foreign policy to make a meaningful impact on women's rights and human rights around the world, progressives must pursue its aims by understanding the various conflicting interests, perspectives and perceptions of change-driven foreign policy around the world.

In the context of policymaking, progressives must embrace these nuances and this diversity in sociocultural values, power dynamics, intersectionality and societal norms to effectively develop feminist foreign policy and its implementation strategies. **We must ensure that feminist foreign policy does not reinforce the perception of a Western imposition of policies on other sovereign states.** Indeed, this perception has led to recent pushback on such policies by certain nation states, particularly in the Global South. If this is taken into consideration, feminist foreign policy might stand a reasonable chance of securing buy-in from national governments and societies while achieving progress in the sociocultural, political and economic rights of women globally.

Progressives must recognise that feminist foreign policy encompasses much of our agenda to promote people-centred policies around the world. **By adopting and promoting feminist foreign policy, we will spur the necessary action to foster women's rights as well as other values such as justice, human rights and inclusive development.** We must make the necessary commitments to turn our idea of a truly progressive world, which promotes women's rights, into a reality. A win for women globally is a win for humanity as a whole.



*Benedicta Lasi,
Secretary-General of
Socialist International*



A feminist foreign policy? Redefining its meaning

by Serena Giusti

Traditionally, foreign policy has belonged to the realm of high politics and has long been conducted in accordance with the doctrine of the *raison d'état* (reason of state) and in the *arcana imperii* (state secrets), where only men have been present. Foreign policy, more than other policies, has therefore been particularly masculinised. When, in 2014, Margot Wallström, as Sweden's minister of foreign affairs in the government led by the Social Democratic prime minister Stefan Löfven, for the first time called for a feminist foreign policy, it sparked a huge debate. Now, however, a redefinition seems necessary.

Although the Swedish proposal appeared as a breakthrough, it had solid roots. It certainly reflected the spirit of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of the year 2000, invoking the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace-making, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. It also anticipated the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, which were established by the UN in 2015, and in particular goal number 5, which advocates the end of all discrimination against women and girls. Ending discrimination is not only a basic human right but a crucial component for a sustainable future, as it is proven that empowering women and girls helps economic growth and development. In 2020, the European Union endorsed the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025, which promotes women's leadership and participation, and pushes for gender mainstreaming and an intersectional approach that considers all dimensions of discrimination.

While capturing the zeitgeist and the need to bridge the gap between men and women in international politics, the introduction of the concept of a feminist foreign policy did not clarify its full implications. It rather seemed like a label, which is still to be filled in by practice, but also by ideas and norms. The concept involves at least two aspects of foreign policy: its formulation and its content in terms of the consequences it can bring for women and more widely for the international system.

Regarding the first aspect, one goal of the formulation of a feminist foreign policy should be for more women to participate in shaping foreign policy. UN Resolution 1325 considers conflict situations, when peace is concluded or when peacebuilding and conflict prevention actions are implemented. However, this approach considers women as stakeholders of processes already set in motion by others, and only hands them a role as vectors of dialogue and peace. In other words, it does not emphasise that more women must be

where decisions are taken, rather than simply holding a minor position dealing with the outcomes of those decisions. **A truly feminist foreign policy should encompass all levels of power and should help women reach top positions, rather than leaving them bearing the consequences of foreign policy decisions taken mostly by men.** In other words, women should influence policies and participate in all fora where political issues are discussed and decided.

► *While capturing the zeitgeist and the need to bridge the gap between men and women in international politics, the introduction of the concept of a feminist foreign policy did not clarify its full implications.*

- ▶ *A truly feminist foreign policy should encompass all levels of power and should help women reach top positions, rather than leaving them bearing the consequences of foreign policy decisions taken mostly by men.*

On the second aspect, relating to the application of foreign policy, the consequences of the foreign policy of any country or organisation should be the promotion of gender equality and the improvement of the conditions of women, especially in difficult contexts. This has been the case, for instance, for policies supported by international organisations in favour of women in Afghanistan and Iran, or for policies promoted by the EU within the European Neighbourhood Policy.

If one looks at certain definitions of feminist foreign policy offered by feminist organisations, its meaning tends to be broad. The International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) describes it as the policy of a state that defines its interaction with other states, as well as with movements and other non-state actors, in a manner that prioritises peace, gender equality and environmental integrity, and that enshrines the human rights of all. The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy meanwhile emphasises that a feminist foreign policy should place the well-being of marginalised individuals, not just women, at the centre of all actions of foreign policy. **The ultimate goal should be to change the power structures and norms by addressing the root causes of existing inequalities, not just in gender, but also in its intersection with other dimensions such as race, class, or sexual orientation.** In other words, gender tends to be interpreted through the lens of intersectionality but is also interpreted as linked to other policies relating to ecology, equality, social justice and peace.



© UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

This broad understanding of feminist foreign policy is rather ambitious and may end up characterising women with certain attributes (like those of being caring, peaceful, calm and compromising). This would risk further stereotyping women or imposing a certain restrictive mindset.

In November 2020, two MEPs from the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, Hannah Neumann and Ernest Urtasun, presented a report calling for the EU to adopt a feminist foreign policy. The report points out the different interpretations of gender and gender equality as one of the main challenges for the EU in this perspective. The report also states that one of the priorities of a feminist foreign policy should be to "reverse the militarisation of the EU external action and prioritise human security" and to "end the export of arms manufactured in Europe and by companies registered in Europe". While this standpoint can be appreciated, it also contributes to strengthening stereotypes, as if women were, by essence, opposed to a deepening of the European security and defence identity, or to the possibility of establishing a common European army, or as if women were opposed to providing Ukraine with weapons in its current war against Russia.

An open and EU-wide debate is needed on what a feminist foreign policy actually aspires to achieve, taking account of the fact that it cannot be isolated from policies that help women reach top positions in their respective countries and within the EU. A new and trailblazing approach to a feminist foreign policy cannot be attributed solely to women. Furthermore, for a feminist foreign policy to be credible, the EU needs to improve the condition of women in those member states where gender equality is still lagging.

*Serena Giusti,
lecturer of International
Relations at Sant'Anna
School of Advanced Studies
and Senior Associate
Research Fellow at the
Institute for International
Studies (ISPI) in Milan*



The cost of victory: coping with the prospect of Ukraine's 'lost generation'

by Andriy Korniychuk

The civilian population continues to bear the brunt of Russia's unprovoked onslaught on Ukraine. Yet Russia's possible defeat on the battlefield might well prove to be a Pyrrhic victory for Ukraine, which now faces the daunting prospect of having to cope with a 'lost generation' of its citizens.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, the social fabric of Ukrainian society has been put under unprecedented stress. Indeed, Moscow's self-proclaimed 'special military operation' has all the markings of a genocidal war against the Ukrainian nation. Russia's self-labelled 'liberation' efforts are replete with grave violations of human rights. Relying on brute force and having little to no respect for human life, *Russkiy mir* ('the Russian world') equates to total destruction, perpetual pain and unfathomable suffering. Falling short of realising its military goals, Moscow continues to fight by purposefully and methodically targeting the civilian population and critical infrastructure in an attempt to break the Ukrainian spirit.

Despite the atrocities that are being committed daily by the Russian forces, the resolve of the Ukrainian nation to defend the country remains unshaken. For a year already, the world has expressed its admiration for the brave resistance of Ukrainians against the ruthless aggressor. **However, this 'success' comes at**

a staggering human cost and potentially irreversible changes to the socio-demographic fabric of the nation. So far in the public discourse, the focus of the Russo-Ukraine war has been placed predominantly on the question of territory. Yet people are equally – if not more – important for Ukraine's future. The country obviously needs soldiers to win a war, but it also needs qualified human capital to recover, modernise and transform. Russia's ultimate defeat on the battlefield might thus prove to be a Pyrrhic victory for Ukraine, should the country face the daunting prospect of having to cope with a 'lost generation'.

Ukraine's demographic situation prior to the full-scale invasion had already presented a major challenge to its (democratic) development. Indeed, the UN Human Development Index pointed to a number of worrying trends such as a low birth rate, emigration of the population and the ageing of society – all of which have plagued the country for decades. Although reliable demographic data are hard to

find, various estimates assert that the population has shrunk by at least 10-12 million people since Ukraine gained independence in 1991. **Russia's war against Ukraine, which de facto started in 2014, significantly aggravated these existing demographic challenges and has begun to alter the structure of the population even more.** Many of the localities in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, in close vicinity to the military fighting or directly targeted by it, have in effect ceased to exist, or have been destroyed to such an extent that future reconstruction is unlikely.

► *So far in the public discourse, the focus of the Russo-Ukraine war has been laid predominantly on the question of territory. Yet, people are equally – if not more – important for Ukraine's future.*

To make things worse, the UN estimates that since the full-scale invasion started in 2022, at least 12 million have left their homes – as internally displaced persons or forced to flee to another country. And even the very conduct of the war creates additional challenges for Ukraine's future. Russia does not shy away from conscripting and sending felons and convicts to the battlefield. Its most talented, qualified, and



© Drop of Light / Shutterstock.com

educated flee the country in thousands in fear of mobilisation and a further escalation of the war. At the same time, **Ukraine continues to pay the highest price for resistance: broken families and loss of life, including among the members of its future elite – the brightest minds and innovators, many of whom without any hesitation enrolled in the army to defend their homes.** The majority of those who are most affected by the ongoing war are vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly. Although the tendency is to focus on the 'here and now', as we are still in the active phase of the war, the future (or lack thereof) of Ukraine's younger generation deserves considerable attention. In a relatively short space of time, young Ukrainians have had to find a way to cope with two life-altering events: coming out of a global pandemic, they found themselves in a full-scale war. It will take years, if not decades, to cope with the trauma inflicted by both. And even more so as Ukrainian society never had sufficient time or the necessary tools to process the traumas that were already deeply ingrained in their collective memory due to a centuries-long violent and troubled past.

Yet Russia continues to undertake targeted efforts to deprive Ukrainians of their future. According to the Ukrainian authorities, at least 13,000 children have been forcefully resettled

to Russian territory by the occupation forces. In many cases, the fate of these children remains unknown, but reports have already emerged about various 're-education' practices by Russia and attempts to send these children to 'foster families'. Children who were able to move to safer places face challenges of their own. Around 54 per cent of teachers currently working in Ukraine speak of professional burnout, while 74 per cent of surveyed schoolchildren report being stressed. Those who have moved abroad encounter a language barrier, double workload, a lack of equipment to study and academic differences. Furthermore, the gravity of psychological trauma and the challenges regarding integration into host communities are only starting to be comprehensively analysed. Solutions to address them are still far from being found.

Ultimately, while the Ukrainian Armed Forces continue to repel the aggressor, the rest of Ukrainian society has to put up an unprecedented level of resilience and resolve to approximate the victory in the war on an everyday basis. In response to a genocidal invasion, Ukrainians have no other option but to resist and win. Yet, **all those who support Ukraine's cause should fully realise that victory will come at a very high cost. This is all the more so because Russia purposefully targets civilians as part of its military**

tactics. Already now, it seems very likely that the gender and age structure of the population in Ukraine will be significantly altered.

The shortage of labour force and the brain drain will emerge as substantial challenges during the post-war recovery. And although Ukrainians are "world champions in survival" (to quote philosopher Volodymyr Yermolenko), the future generation(s) of its citizens will need to process the deep trauma inflicted by Russia's brutal onslaught. Those who continue to stand with Ukraine must remember that the support should extend beyond military assistance, and enable the country to address its ongoing socio-demographic changes. The latter will have a profound impact on the resilience of Ukraine's democracy. Unfortunately, time is not on Ukraine's side. It is indeed 'now or never'. This is why the decisiveness of its international partners to provide the necessary assistance in a timely manner is of paramount importance for Ukraine's future.

*Andriy Korniychuk,
member of the European
Studies Unit, Institute of
Philosophy and Sociology,
Polish Academy of Sciences*



Navigating time and shaping the future

by **Victoria Vdovychenko**

"This present moment used to be the unimaginable future"

Stewart Brand, *The clock of the long now*

Stewart Brand's quote resonates with me when I look back at the last year. A long-awaited holiday, apartment renovation, new business development... – these were the ordinary plans of Ukrainians for 2022. Instead, many had to leave their 'normal' life, their families and their homes. You will have seen it in photos or video streams: children's toys are lying crushed under rubble, alongside food and other debris that has been blasted out of cupboards. An immense force reduced the three-dimensional living space of millions of apartments into two dimensions. This has caused unspeakable pain for those who have witnessed it.

I don't like to call it the 'sad anniversary of a full-scale invasion'. Apart from all the atrocities and suffering, let me call it a year of full-scale transformations – personal, professional, regional and national.

It has been a year when ordinary Ukrainian people have started to do extraordinary things. And these extraordinary things have been related to knowing how to evacuate yourself, your relatives, or a person whom you have never met before.

Ukraine has made a civilisational choice in favour of democracy, as all European countries once did. It has come a long way, but independent Ukraine has never participated in armed conflicts in other territories as an aggressor. It has only defended itself.

One of the significant consequences of the war with Russia has been a radical reform of domestic

political life in Ukraine. First of all, these developments related to those regions and citizens who, despite Russia's aggression since 2014, had been pro-Russian. Polls conducted in Ukraine in March, May and October 2022, as well as in February 2023, confirm that more than 86 per cent of Ukrainians believe that their country will win the war, while 80 per cent of those who had been neutral before the full-scale invasion are now completely against Russia's actions.

Ukrainian politics has undergone sweeping changes since 24 February 2022. Never before have we been so united. The first lesson the country has learned is that it is only in unity that we can continue to fight, and to exist. Ukraine has chosen a 'one voice policy' and has chosen to call on the whole world to support us.

On 20 March 2022, the National Security and Defence Council suspended the activities of

parties in Ukraine that had ties to the Russian Federation. This concerned 11 parties in total. One of them, the 'Opposition Platform – For Life' has elected members in the parliament and in numerous local councils of all levels throughout the territory of Ukraine. Two more parties – 'Shariy Party' and 'Nashi' – had a stable electorate before the war and, according to polling data, could have overcome the 5 per cent electoral threshold in the elections.

Ukrainian people have understood that our future is in the EU. At the end of February 2022, President Volodymyr Zelensky therefore announced Ukraine's request for EU candidacy status – which the EU granted at the end of June 2022. The basis for our candidacy was the successful implementation of 63 per cent of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine prior to February 2022. As of the beginning of 2023, that progress



© Drop of Light / Shutterstock.com

reached a total of 73 per cent of implementation – which is a remarkable feat: a country carrying out reforms during a full-scale invasion. These reforms are related to sectors of the judiciary – in particular anti-corruption – but also to economic development and the military.

Support for Ukraine's accession to the EU is growing steadily. In April 2014, Ukrainian support for EU membership stood at 54 per cent; in March 2022 it had reached a record 91 per cent.

In these current war conditions, trade between Ukraine and the European Union and the country's integration into the EU internal market is key to preserving the Ukrainian economy and to a rapid economic recovery afterwards.

Our domestic agenda is now focused on 'self-screening': Ukraine is checking to what extent its legislation is in line with the EU acquis. In practice, this will also mean the implementation of a host of reforms – again, reforms that are undertaken in the conditions of a full-scale invasion.

On 3 February 2023, the European Commission published a report on Ukraine's ability to fulfil the obligations tied to our country's EU candidacy status. On the positive side, the document states that Ukraine has a good level of preparation in

the field of customs control, energy policy and foreign relations, particularly in foreign commercial relations. The country also has a good level of progress in the security and defence sectors. The European Commission makes a positive assessment of Ukraine's cooperation with the EU in the fight against cyber threats and disinformation. Alongside this, Ukraine is in the early stages of preparation for its implementation of EU legislation in the field of the environment and climate change, agriculture, social policy and employment.

However, on the negative side, the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and related documents remains an unresolved issue. Furthermore, the EU emphasised the progress needed in judicial reform "in accordance with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, including the reform of the Constitutional Court and the procedure for the selection of politically independent and qualified constitutional judges".

At the same time, however, significant progress has been made in ensuring the independent and effective work of anti-corruption institutions and in bringing Ukraine's media legislation into line with the EU acquis on audiovisual media. Ukrainian experts and members of parliament emphasise that our fight against corruption is

now inevitable. **Cleaning up corruption is a requirement for EU accession. In June 2022, the Ukrainian Parliament therefore approved its Anti-Corruption Strategy (2021-2025) – one of the benchmarks of an effective implementation of anti-corruption legislation.** The strategy is actually a step-by-step plan on how to reform 15 socially important areas with the highest level of corruption. At present, the adopted initiative is somewhat inhibited by the government, but the corruption scandals about which we have heard in January and February 2023 prove that anti-corruption institutions in Ukraine are working.

This present moment is our unimaginable future. Ukraine's geopolitical integration into the West and its institutions is no less critical than Leopard or Abrams tanks for the defence of Ukraine. **If you watch how fast Ukraine is moving ahead with its transformation and reforms, it seems as if the EU is riding a bicycle while Ukraine is on a hyperloop.**

But will all this be enough? That's a very difficult question.

It is true that the speed with which the Ukrainians prepared for candidacy and, at the same time, made political, economic and military breakthroughs is simply breathtaking for Europeans.

However, it is widely known in the EU that Kyiv's path to full membership will be a long process that could take years. At the same time, the EU also needs to deal with the expectations of other EU candidates, particularly from the Western Balkans.

Victoria Valovychenko is Associate Professor at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Associate Professor at the University of Bologna, and Fellow of the British Academy



A tragic anniversary: one year into the Russo-Ukrainian war

by Stephen Eric Bronner

The first anniversary of a nightmare has passed, and it probably won't be the last. The body bags are multiplying day by day. Russian military losses are staggering: well over 100,000 killed or wounded. Ukraine has suffered over 20,000 casualties, many more have died from malnutrition and sickness, and more than 20 per cent of the population, eight million refugees, have fled the country. As Russia despairs over lost hopes, and its declining international prestige, Ukraine is mired in rubble. Its infrastructure has been smashed, its environment incalculably devastated, and its citizenry lives in fear.

Centralisation of power is taking place in both Russia and Ukraine. Dissenters are driven underground, minorities are fearful, human rights are compromised, corruption is widespread, and public life is decaying. Increasingly, the gap is widening between the interests of two sovereigns, which they equate with those of their nations, and their subjects who must bear the burden of their choices.

Terminating assistance for Ukraine remains unthinkable, but tying aid to conditions attendant upon its pursuit of peace is not.

The United States has already sent \$113 billion, twice the amount it wasted in Afghanistan, and 2023 has been greeted with the promise of another \$6.5 billion. In the US, left-wing critics are grumbling about funding a proxy war, and the profits accrued by the military-industrial complex, while influential extremists in the Republican Party are embracing isolationism and intent on cutting off aid entirely. Moreover, **polls indicate that Ukraine is a**

very low priority in the minds of American voters. Is Europe willing to shoulder more of the burden? 'Maybe' is not an answer!

A new Russian offensive is underway and a second front may open through Belarus. Will the US and NATO send troops if current forms of military and financial prove inadequate? Of course, **Russian forces might be thrown back, and regime change could occur. Will regional implosion follow? The resulting repercussions are impossible to predict, and Western leaders should be careful what they wish for.** Russia has withdrawn from its nuclear arms reduction treaty with the United States and President Vladimir Putin's disclaimers concerning tactical nuclear strikes should not be taken at face value. That is especially the case if he feels backed into a corner without an exit option.

Two global blocs are forming that feature the EU, the US, NATO, Great Britain and Ukraine on

one side, and China, North Korea, Iran, South Africa, possibly India, and the 'stans' of Central Asia on the other. China is the wild card. **A major trading partner with the West, China views Russia as a crucial ally in challenging American hegemony.** China is engaged in a computer 'chip war' with the US and there is fierce competition between them over semiconductors.

► *Russian forces might be thrown back, and regime change could occur. Will regional implosion follow? The resulting repercussions are impossible to predict, and Western leaders should be careful what they wish for.*

- *Treaties between friends are easy to conclude. Between enemies, it is another matter, however, especially when they both insist on having their respective goals met before any talks take place.*

President Joseph Biden has been outspoken in defence of Taiwan against Chinese threats and, most likely, aid packages for Indonesia and the Philippines are already being prepared. **President Xi Jinping's call for a 'cease-fire' does not turn him into a saint, only a very canny politician.** Cease-fire or stalemate, which can easily devolve into trench warfare, will make Russia even more dependent on Chinese support and, simultaneously, drain Western resources. 'Neither peace nor war', using Trotsky's phrase, is not the same as disarmament or a peace treaty.

President Putin has re-stated his readiness to participate in an international peace conference. His conditions for beginning discussions remain unchanged: Ukraine must first demilitarise, recognise the Russian annexations, especially Crimea and territories around Kherson, and guarantee Russian security. Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelensky, is no less disingenuous regarding negotiations: Russia must first meet ten conditions including withdrawing its forces from all Ukrainian territories including Crimea. **Treaties between friends are easy to conclude. Between enemies, however, it is another matter, especially when they both insist on having their respective goals met before any talks take place.**

When Russia launched its invasion one year ago, Western fears of 'appeasement' were understandable. New imperialist undertakings are unlikely, however, given its losses and miscalculations. Nevertheless, sanctions have not brought Russia to its knees: its trade



© Photowalking / Shutterstock.com

has 'bounced back' to pre-war levels, and its GDP has unexpectedly risen 0.3 per cent over the past year, going to 2.1 per cent next year. **Given Putin's institutional *Gleichschaltung* (unification) of Russia, which marks all totalitarian regimes, domestic dissent is also likely under control.** Shifting gears, Ukraine asserted its right of national self-determination in resisting Russia's invasion, which is in accord with international law. However, whether by design or not, it is now completely reliant on foreign assistance and the nation's sovereignty will remain compromised so long as the war continues.

Western centre-left-leaning mass media have mostly turned into irresponsible cheerleaders for Ukraine just as was initially the case when the United States became involved in Vietnam and Iraq. Responsible critics are dismissed, alternative policies are ignored, while complexities and risks remain unexamined. The parameters for peace are clear and, given that geo-political realities will

not magically disappear, they are unlikely to change. **In this morally just war it is really moral to keep demanding useless sacrifices?** That seems a legitimate question as the second year of the nightmare begins.

This article is based on a speech for the conference One year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Social democratic perspectives on war and reconstruction, organised by FEPS on 23 February 2023.

*Stephen Eric Bronner,
co-Director of the
International Council
for Diplomacy and
Dialogue and Board of
Governors Distinguished
Professor Emeritus at
Rutgers University*



One year of war in Ukraine: solidarity starts locally

by Vasco Alves Cordeiro

'Unbroken'. This is the name mayor Andryi Sadovyi has chosen to give the rehabilitation centre that he intends to build in his city, Lviv, for all Ukrainians arriving there injured by the war. "Many of them have lost everything. Home. Family. Childhood. And yet they remain... unbroken". On top of the admirable resistance it shows, this example also demonstrates the enormous role that mayors, local and regional elected representatives have played in Ukraine to help their communities survive since the start of Putin's brutal invasion.

Many lessons can and will be drawn from this year that has seen a country on the European continent under attack. One lesson, however, has become clear through the response of cities and regions across Europe, and it is one that will continue to guide their engagement in the future: solidarity starts locally.

► *Solidarity was not born on 24 February 2022. It existed before the full-scale invasion, with many cities already working together in strong twinning partnerships.*

I am honoured to represent all cities and regions across the European Union as President of the European Committee of the Regions. Our commitment and support for Ukraine have been extremely strong and we keep calling for it also to be considered for the reconstruction.

It all began the day of the invasion, when town halls and monuments all over Europe were lit up in blue and yellow to stand with Ukraine. These symbolic actions were quickly followed by spontaneous and direct humanitarian aid offers with convoys leaving European regions to reach the border with Ukraine. The French region of Occitanie, for example, sent one of the many convoys with first aid, food and beds. Other initiatives were also taken very fast to welcome people,

like the initiative taken by the Polish city of Świdnica, which immediately mobilised to provide safe conditions for those escaping the war. Squares across the European Union saw thousands of people mobilising to demand an end to the war, while local governments like that in the city of Vienna decided to provide free public transport, and also medical and psychological support, to displaced Ukrainian people.

This solidarity was not born on 24 February 2022. It existed before the full-scale invasion, with many cities already working together in strong twinning partnerships, and also via the European Committee of the Regions which has been coordinating the sharing of experience and good practice for decentralisation, division of powers and

devolution since 2014. And now, a year after the war started, this solidarity is stronger than ever and will remain fundamental to helping Ukraine overcome two major challenges: reconstruction and joining the European Union.

► *Since the first day of the invasion, the Committee of the Regions has unconditionally supported Ukraine's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty.*

Since the first day of the invasion, the Committee of the Regions has unconditionally supported Ukraine's unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty. In June last year, with the participation of the Association of

Ukrainian Cities and other partners, we launched the European Alliance of Regions and Cities for the Reconstruction of Ukraine – a movement that continues to expand, bringing together dozens of cities, regions and partners. The Alliance's call is clear: to support Ukrainian cities and regions in their reconstruction efforts, both politically and concretely, combining this process with a strengthening of local democracy. We have seen the key role played by cities and regions in Ukraine during this war. Their role will be essential for the reconstruction too. The needs for the reconstruction amount to €327 billion, according to an estimate made in November by the Ukrainian Ministry for Communities and Territorial Development. Cities and regions are not waiting on the sidelines: Brno in the Czech Republic has donated trams and buses to Kharkiv, while Cascais (Portugal) is working to rebuild kindergartens in Irpin and Bucha, Gdansk (Poland) has helped Borodyanka with water supply facilities, and Prague (Czech Republic) has sent power generators to use in local schools.

We also supported the request of the Association of Ukrainian Cities to organise summer camps for children from Ukraine in EU countries in order to ensure physical and psychological support. More than a thousand children were hosted in regions and cities in France, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal and more, last summer. We now plan to work with UNICEF to ensure the best care for Ukrainian children welcomed in our communities.

This one-year anniversary of the start of the war must first and foremost be an occasion to remember all the victims. But it must also be about confirming our commitment to support Ukraine. European cities and regions will continue to do their part so that from today's suffering and rubble, we can together build the next page of the European Union's future.



© DimaSid / Shutterstock.com

*Vasco Alves Cordeiro,
President of the European
Committee of the Regions*



Fighting for equality rather than copying far-right populist positions on immigration

by Daphne Halikiopoulou and Tim Vlandas

Far-right populist parties have mobilised economically insecure voters by scapegoating immigration. Social Democrats should re-set the agenda by mobilising around equality, rather than copying far-right populist strategies.

The far right is no longer confined to the political margins. Under the more palatable guise of 'populism', and a language that centres on national and popular sovereignty, far-right populist parties have made considerable electoral gains in the past decade, increasingly becoming a concern for the future of our European democracies. With their nationalist, anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic platforms they challenge democracy not just because of the amount of support they are capable of mobilising (after all, electoral support is volatile, and parties tend to fluctuate in the polls) but most importantly because these parties are now able to drive party competition and shape the strategic decisions of their opponents. Other parties, mostly but not exclusively on the right of the political spectrum, respond to the success of right-wing populist parties by accepting to join forces in coalition governments or adopting copycat policies, particularly on immigration, in the hope of 'winning voters back'. This, we argue, is not a winning strategy for Social Democrats.

PATTERNS OF SUCCESS

A closer look at the widespread success of far-right populist parties across Europe reveals three patterns.

1. The parties that made the headlines by rapidly increasing their electoral support

The Alternative for Germany (AfD) entered the Bundestag after performing extraordinarily well in the 2013 elections; the Rassemblement National (RN) performed very well in the 2017 and 2022 French presidential elections as well as during the 2019 European Parliament elections; the success of Spain's Vox and Portugal's Chega has challenged Spanish and Portuguese 'exceptionalism'; while the entry of Greece's Golden Dawn (GD) – an openly neo-Nazi party – in the Greek parliament in 2012 shocked pundits and social scientists alike, given the extent to which Greece had suffered from Nazi atrocities in the past.

2. Those in government

Either alone or as partners in coalition governments, right-wing populists are increasingly given the opportunity to govern. Examples abound: Italy's Brothers of Italy (FdI) and Lega, Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS), Hungary's Fidesz, the Danish People's Party (DF) and the National Alliance (NA) in Latvia. **The policy of marginalising extreme parties in the political system – the so-called 'cordon sanitaire' – has broken down even in countries where it has traditionally been effective: in 2022, for the first time, Swedish centre-right parties negotiated support for a governing coalition with the – formerly fascist – Sweden Democrats (SD).**

3. The successful opposition

In much of Europe, far-right populist parties' success takes the form of systemic entrenchment, or in other words, the gradual ability of niche parties to permeate the

- *Political actors have agency and can shape political outcomes: to understand why some individuals vote for right-wing populist parties, we should not only focus on their risk-driven grievances, but also on policies that may moderate these risks.*

mainstream ground. Initially niche actors operating on the fringes of the political system, many right-wing populist parties have now increased their support beyond their secure voter base by becoming progressively embedded in the political system as credible opposition parties that are able to influence the policy agenda of other parties. The RN, the DF and the SD have all, for example, successfully competed in their domestic systems, permeating mainstream ground and prompting their competitors to adopt accommodative strategies.

| WHY MATERIAL CONCERNS MATTER

What explains this success? **For many analysts, the rise of far-right populism is a cultural story because issues 'owned' by right-wing populist parties, such as immigration, nationalism and cultural grievances, are salient in the current political climate.** Evidence supporting this narrative is that immigration scepticism tends to be the strongest predictor of far-right populist party support. As such, many suggest the left should tailor its narrative to cater for such demand and downplay the importance of traditional materialist societal divisions. This view, however, overlooks three key issues that highlight the persistence of material concerns in shaping voting behaviour:



© David Raw / Shutterstock.com

1. **The assumption that immigration is by default a cultural issue is at best problematic**

There are significant economic and trust-related voter concerns. People may be sceptical of immigration for economic reasons, fearing or buying into narratives which suggest immigrants are labour market competitors taking away natives' jobs and welfare access. Indeed, both cultural and economic concerns over immigration increase the likelihood of voting for a far-right populist party. However, while cultural concerns are often the strongest predictor of far-right populist party support, these concerns do not automatically increase far-right populist parties' success. This is because people with economic concerns are often numerically a larger group.

To visualise the distinction between predictive strength and numerical importance, suppose there are only two types of voters. First, those driven by ideology and who oppose immigration on principle. These voters are likely to identify more fully with right-wing populist

platforms and are more likely to switch from 'far' to centre-right if the centre-right party was to adopt an anti-immigration stance. Second are the protest or peripheral voters whose opposition to immigration is contingent. They are primarily concerned with its economic impact and tend to support the populist right as a way of expressing their discontent and punishing the establishment. **These voters feel economically insecure and may have lost trust in institutions and the political system. Because they have salient concerns about inequality – broadly defined – and have no principled opposition to immigration, these voters can 'switch' to parties that 'own' issues related to (in)equality and offer effective policy solutions to them.** Since the interests and preferences of these two groups can differ, successful right-wing populist parties tend to be those that can attract both groups. Given that voters with economic concerns are often a numerically larger group, what determines the success of far-right populists is the ability to mobilise economically concerned voters more broadly.

2. The strategies that far-right populist parties themselves are pursuing to capitalise on multiple insecurities, including cultural and economic insecurities

Far-right populist parties in western Europe employ a civic nationalist normalisation strategy, excluding on the basis of ideological rather than biological criteria of national belonging. This allows them to offer nationalist solutions to all types of insecurities that drive voting behaviour. This strategy has two features: first, it presents culture as a value issue and justifies exclusion on ideological grounds; and second, it focuses on social welfare and welfare chauvinism. Indeed, far-right populist parties which 'own' the immigration issue and have benefitted electorally from its increased salience have themselves attempted to capitalise on its many dimensions. They emphasise not only the erosion of cultural norms, but also competition in the labour market, public goods provision, housing scarcity, crime and terrorism. By directly associating these concerns with immigration these parties increasingly propose solutions that are distinct from their older market-liberal stances.

3. The role of social policies

Political actors have agency and can shape political outcomes: to understand why some individuals vote for right-wing populist parties, we should not only focus on their risk-driven grievances, but also on policies that may moderate these risks. While economic developments obviously affect the life chances, insecurities and risks that individuals face, the degree of redistribution and the social insurance provided by developed welfare states shape the prevalence of insecurity and risks, and in turn, their political consequences. Indeed, welfare state policies traditionally associated with the left reduce the likelihood of support for far-right populist parties among insecure individuals (for example the unemployed, pensioners, low-income workers and employees on temporary contracts). The mechanism is twofold, as these policies both protect and compensate insecure individuals.

LESSONS LEARNED: WHY EQUALITY IS KEY

Co-opting the policy agendas of far-right populist parties is not a winning strategy for Social Democrats for two main reasons. First, the electorates of centre-left and far-right populist parties have considerably different stances, especially on immigration.

► *A better strategy for Social Democrats is to reclaim ownership of the issue they know best: (in)equality. Successful strategies will be those that galvanise the centre-left's core voter base and mobilise beyond it by addressing the (economic) grievances that concern large parts of the electorate.*

The percentage of voters with immigration concerns among the centre-left electorate is quite low. The few that do have immigration concerns are still primarily driven by economic considerations. These voters are highly unlikely to be attracted to culturalist arguments of right-wing populist parties, and may abandon centre-left parties if they adopt such positions. While Social Democrats may attract a small number of far-right populist voters through policy accommodation, they will likely alienate a much larger proportion of centre-left voters. Second, 'copycat' strategies that extend well beyond an issue that a party 'owns' are rarely electorally successful. All that this type of policy accommodation will do is increase the salience of the immigration issue, thus running the danger of further inflating support for far-right populist parties by pushing voters directly to those parties that 'own' this issue.

A better strategy for Social Democrats is to reclaim ownership of the issue they know best: (in)equality. Successful strategies will

be those that galvanise the centre-left's core voter base and mobilise beyond it by addressing the (economic) grievances that concern large parts of the electorate. Indeed, voters concerned about inequality are numerically substantial. These concerns are not niche, especially within the current climate of rising inflation. There is widespread concern among people about access to housing and health, working conditions, job security and equal opportunities. Women need equal pay, families need affordable childcare, young people need reassuring employment prospects, pensioners expect some security for their retirement, and new middle-class individuals support welfare states that offer them a sense of security. **These groups need concrete and effective proposals that will incentivise them, protect them, and provide them with high quality public services. Social Democrats must speak to these voters by clearly articulating a vision of an equitable society and by proposing a credible plan to implement this vision.** Pioneering a strategy that centres on an issue Social Democrats credibly 'own' will allow them to re-build their own broad voter coalitions.



*Daphne Halikiopoulou,
Chair in Comparative
Politics at the
University of York*



*Tim Vlandas,
Associate Professor
in the Department of
Social Policy, Fellow in
St Antony's College and
associate member in
Nuffield College, all at
the University of Oxford*

← NEXT LEFT →



The Next Left Focus Group, established in 2009 by FEPS and Karl-Renner-Institut, developed the Next Left book series.

Today the group carries on its work under the leadership of MEP Andreas Schieder. It continues to promote innovative ideas and to be a unique forum for discussion about the future of social democracy.

READ THE LATEST PUBLICATIONS VOL. 12 AND VOL. 13

Christian Democracy's crisis is bad for everyone – including the Left

by Fabio Wolkenstein

Currently, Europe's leading Christian Democratic parties are facing a major crisis as they lack principled leadership and programmatic vision. A major risk is that they respond to this crisis by emulating authoritarian political projects.

Christian Democratic parties have historically been among the most important political forces in western Europe. Parties such as the German CDU, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and, at least until its dramatic dissolution in 1994, the Italian *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), have for decades defined the meaning of centre-right politics on the continent. After 1945, they successfully committed members of anti-democratic and reactionary milieux to constitutional democracy. This was crucial for the stabilisation of the European post-war order. Christian Democratic parties also played a key role in initiating the process of European integration. And, at least until the mid-1980s, they supported many social policies that resonated with workers and enabled collaborations with the left, as in the many successive *centro-sinistra* 'organico'-coalition governments in Italy.

The Christian Democratic parties of the past were no doubt internally heterogeneous groupings without a single, clear-cut agenda. This was not a bug but a feature of classic Christian Democracy. Some Christian Democratic politicians indeed took pride in the fact that their parties did not pursue

grand ideological projects. For example, Josef Hermann Duffhues, who in the 1960s acted as the CDU's executive chairman, argued that party manifestos are "little more than a secularised and tactically embellished creed, which is only needed by those who otherwise have no world view". Duffhues believed that Christian Democrats should be guided by their Christian values and a concern for resolving citizens' concrete problems. They should strive to achieve compromises between different societal interests and occupy a position in the political centre. Accordingly, Christian Democracy of the 1960s and 1970s was generally a centrist or centre-right enterprise, and its advocates were mostly committed democrats. **Occasionally, Christian Democratic politicians pandered to citizens who sympathised with the far right. And some conservative Christian Democrats retained sympathies for authoritarian leaders. Yet these were hardly representative of Christian Democracy as a whole** (although this 'dark', more authoritarian side of Christian Democracy never vanished entirely).

The few genuinely Christian Democratic parties that still exist today, most notably the German

CDU and the Austrian ÖVP, are struggling to position themselves ideologically. One problem the two parties have in common is that for many years they have relied heavily on the capacity of popular political leaders to mobilise electoral support, while neglecting the question of what their parties should stand for, over and above being organisations with leaders that voters like and trust.

► *The problem facing the CDU is not so much that Angela Merkel's 16-year-long chancellorship has made the party too centrist or 'un-conservative', as critics allege – but that hardly anyone seems to have put any thought into what German Christian Democracy without Merkel could be.*



© Mirko Kuzmanovic / Shutterstock.com

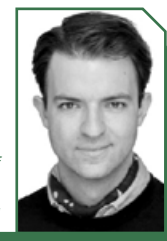
Seen in this light, **the problem facing the CDU is not so much that Angela Merkel's 16-year-long chancellorship has made the party too centrist or 'un-conservative', as critics allege – but that hardly anyone seems to have put any thought into what German Christian Democracy without Merkel could be.** The fact that Merkel's successor Friedrich Merz is himself pursuing a centrist line after repeatedly promising a pronounced shift to the right suggests that he had no clear idea of what the CDU should aspire to be, either. For the ÖVP, the challenge is different but equally serious: the short-lived but virtually all-encompassing reliance on the person of Sebastian Kurz (and his close circle) between 2017 and 2021 has engulfed the party in a crisis of corruption that has damaged its public image. Given that within the party, no one seemed prepared for a post-Kurz era, neither a programmatic plan B nor an alternative leader were available when Kurz stepped down in autumn 2021.

Why exactly is it problematic that contemporary Christian Democratic parties lack a sharp ideological profile? After all, this clearly did not harm them in the past. For one thing, it must be borne in mind that having 'no clear-cut

agenda' in, say, the early 1960s, meant something very different from what it means today. Back when Josef Hermann Dufhues forcefully rejected party manifestoes, general appeals to the importance of upholding and acting in accordance with 'Christian values' still made a great deal of sense to voters. **Christianity was more than a vague culturalist catchword; there were still many practising Christians around, who would more or less reliably turn out for parties that presented themselves as Christian.** Moreover, implicit in the rejection of broad ambitious agendas was a repudiation of a particular image of socialism or communism – one according to which the aspiration to create a fundamentally new and radically egalitarian society almost inevitably leads to repression and totalitarianism. In the cold war era, this had considerable resonance among western European electorates. In a sense, then, earlier Christian Democrats did actually have a political agenda, albeit a somewhat broad one that was often couched in terms of a non-agenda with strong anti-communist undertones.

For another thing, at the dawn of the 2020s, neither generic appeals to 'Christian values', nor

a firm anti-socialism are likely to entice voters. The ideological vacuum created by the absence of capable leaders (who temporarily managed to veil the parties' lack of direction) must be filled with new ideas that cannot therefore simply be retrieved from the past. In the process of exploring what those new ideas could be, however, **Christian Democrats have become vulnerable to the influence of anti-liberal and authoritarian political entrepreneurs – notably Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán – who claim to have an ambitious political vision that is consistent with classic Christian Democracy.** Unlike western European Christian Democrats, Orbán and his followers have for more than a decade invested great efforts and energies in the production of ideology. And they have managed to convince several leading Christian Democrats at the EU level and in domestic political spheres that what sociologist Dorit Geva describes as "authoritarian and hyper-nationalist neoliberalism" represents a genuine revival of Christian Democracy. **The undeniable strength of Orbán's political project is that it is, well, a project – and an electorally successful one at that.** In an age where the far right seemingly poses the most serious electoral threat to the centre-right, it may well be that Christian Democrats begin copying more and more elements from the Hungarian script. This is bound to put their laudable post-war achievements in jeopardy, destabilising liberal democracy and ruling out any constructive collaboration with the left.



*Fabio Wolkenstein,
Associate Professor of
Transformations of Democracy,
University of Vienna, Austria*

How Fidesz undermines Hungarian support for the EU

by András Bíró-Nagy

Despite high support for EU membership in Hungary, over a decade of Eurosceptic rhetoric by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party has made a lasting impact on voters' attitudes. In the coming years, negative campaigns against the EU may become even more prevalent in Hungarian politics.

Various aspects of the relationship between the Hungarian government and the EU institutions have become sources of conflict in the political communication of the Orbán government, leading to negative campaigning against the EU as a permanent political tool for Fidesz. Recently, these issues have involved debates regarding the rule of law and the quality of Hungarian democracy, the issue of EU funding, EU sanctions on Russia over the war in Ukraine, political control over higher education, and the situation of LGBTQ rights. Moreover, 'Brussels' has been under attack over immigration for years. The Orbán government commonly portrays the EU as a hostile actor threatening Hungarian interests. The government communicates that Hungarians need to be protected from the EU in the same way as from the US-Hungarian billionaire George Soros. It also communicates that they need to be protected from 'migrants', 'western liberals', 'gender ideology' and critical NGOs.

Due to its anti-EU rhetoric over the past 13 years, academic literature now widely describes Fidesz as a Eurosceptic party. Fidesz's shift towards Euroscepticism can be seen not only in its positions on the EU, but also in the attitudes of its voters. It is important to emphasise

that in the Hungarian context, the high support for EU membership, which remains stable at around 70 per cent, is not a suitable indicator of the complexity of Hungarians' attitudes towards the EU. According to Policy Solutions' research on EU attitudes in Hungary, both Fidesz and opposition voters generally agree that Hungary should remain in the EU. However, they have differing views on what they want from the EU. While two thirds of opposition voters would not only stay in the EU, but also give the EU important powers, Fidesz voters are almost equally split between support for the 'Europe of Nations' concept and the desire to give more powers to the EU institutions, with an additional fifth of Fidesz voters nevertheless wanting to leave the EU altogether. **Overall, there is greater support among Fidesz supporters for a policy that emphasises the defence of national sovereignty rather than the promotion of further European integration.**

This aligns with the official position of the governing party, as touted by Orbán. Although leading Fidesz politicians have expressed occasional support for leaving the EU, the Hungarian prime minister maintains that it is in Hungary's best interest to remain a member of the EU. However, Orbán believes the EU must be

reformed and 'put back on the right track'. In his view, the EU should be based on cooperation among nation states, granting more national sovereignty and reducing the EU's competence and interference in Hungary's internal affairs. **Orbán's position is essentially a fight for sovereignty, which resonates with many governing party supporters.**

► *Overall, there is greater support among Fidesz supporters for a policy that emphasises the defence of national sovereignty rather than promoting further European integration.*

There are many further signs that Fidesz's Eurosceptic rhetoric of more than a decade has impacted voters' attitudes. Around 70 per cent of Fidesz voters agree with the notion, frequently disseminated in government communications, that Brussels bureaucrats aim to

force their agenda onto the Hungarian people. This goes together with the fact that 'excessive regulation' and 'loss of national sovereignty' are widely seen as the most significant drawbacks of EU membership. It is also due to the Orbán government's messaging that in recent years voters increasingly name immigration as one of the biggest disadvantages of EU membership. Consequently, of all public policy areas, migration is the one they would most like to see fall under member states' competence. Furthermore, there is a demand for a cultural and nationalist critique of the EU in Hungarian society. Right-wing socio-cultural values (especially anti-multiculturalism and pro-sovereignty) are associated with higher levels of Euroscepticism.

Diverging ideas about the future of the EU could further polarise Hungarian society.

If the focus of the debate on the EU is not whether Hungary should stay in or leave the EU, but whether deeper integration or more national sovereignty is needed, then the distribution on either side of the debate is more even in Hungarian society. Furthermore, as long as Fidesz takes a pro-sovereignty and

EU-critical stance, and refrains from making Hungary's EU membership a point of contention, it will continue on a trajectory that resonates with most of its voters.

► *Orbán's position is essentially a fight for sovereignty, which resonates with many governing party supporters.*

Disputes between the EU and the Hungarian government about EU funds pose a significant threat to the level of support for the EU in Hungary. This is because Hungarians primarily view EU membership as beneficial due to the EU funds and the potential for economic development they bring. Should Hungary's access to EU funds remain frozen for a more extended period, the question of who will be held

responsible by Hungarian voters becomes crucial. While **the external observer could assume that the Orbán government would be blamed for being denied funds based on rule-of-law and corruption concerns, the complex nature of domestic political communication in Hungary makes the situation less clear-cut. In the blame game, whether the narrative of the government or the opposition proves to be more effective could have a significant impact.** Given Fidesz's extensive media machinery and its ability to influence public opinion on a wide range of issues in recent years, there is a genuine risk that the government would effectively frame the freezing of EU funds as a punishment for the Hungarian government's dissenting policies on a range of topics from migration to LGBTQ issues, to sanctions policy.

Moreover, amidst a cost-of-living crisis, the government appears strongly inclined to attribute every domestic economic challenge to the EU. With the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2024, the Orbán government will probably continue to project the image of the EU as its primary adversary. As a result, Eurosceptic voices in Hungary will likely not only persist in the coming years, but may become even more prevalent in domestic politics. **In this context, it is the responsibility of progressive, pro-EU parties to emphasise that Orbán's policies have resulted in a lack of EU funds and that the government's conduct in recent years has significantly damaged national interests.**



© European Union



*András Biró-Nagy,
Director of Policy Solutions
and Senior Research
Fellow at the Centre
for Social Sciences*

Job quality, the foundation of good working lives

by Agnès Parent-Thirion

There is no doubt: the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and work. To avoid damaging long-term effects and to promote good working lives, a comprehensive policy agenda must deliver job quality, but also measures supporting individuals throughout the course of their life. This must be paired with a fair and inclusive labour market.

Covid-19 was a critical event in everyone's working and daily lives. The longer-term effects on health and well-being, future earnings, work motivation and career prospects are still uncertain. However, what is certain is the extent and quality of policy answers will be critical in limiting the negative impact of the pandemic on the workforce and its capacity to engage in work and experience a positive working life. Two main topics come to the fore: the health of the workforce and a gender-friendly work-life balance. The European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS) – a high-quality probability survey that was conducted in 2021 and covered 36 European countries via interviews with 70,000 workers – provides information on both topics.

| THE HEALTH OF THE WORKFORCE

Health and well-being were dominant topics during the pandemic. Learning about the risk of possible exposure to the virus at work helped shed light on the complex relationships between work and health. Data from

the EWCTS confirm that health issues now affect a significant proportion of the workforce. In the 2021 survey, upper limb pains were reported by 57 per cent of workers, followed by backache (54 per cent), headaches (51 per cent), muscular pains in the hip or lower limbs (35 per cent) and anxiety (30 per cent). Physical exhaustion was reported by 23 per cent, chronic illness by 20 per cent, and combined physical and emotional exhaustion (a key combination in burnout) by 13 per cent. **Almost a quarter of workers in Europe are at risk of depression.**

In line with empirical research carried out before the pandemic, the EWCTS showed that workers experiencing job strain reported more health problems. Job strain is characterised by a situation where a worker is exposed to a higher level of job demands (the parts of a given job that require effort and increase a worker's risk of poorer health and well-being, such as exposure to posture-related demands, intensive work, long working hours, violence at work, discrimination and job insecurity) than job resources (the parts of a given job that support workers, such as social support by colleagues, training, autonomy, influence on important

decisions, being able to use one's skills in work, being able to do quality work). **Almost a third of workers (32 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men) experienced job strain during the pandemic.**

► *Almost a third of workers (32 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men) experienced job strain during the pandemic.*

Strained jobs are also associated with poorer mental well-being. While people in good quality jobs (where the resources that are available to the worker outnumber the demands of the job) reach an average score of 74 on a well-being scale of 0-100, workers in extremely strained jobs reach an average score of only 47.

This confirms the relevance of measures supporting the mental and physical health and well-being of workers through the design of quality jobs. Indeed, the design of quality jobs



© Little Pig Studio / Shutterstock.com

is not only relevant but also a necessity, given the high share of workers now experiencing health problems. The design of workplaces and work organisations must therefore take account of these workers' needs in order to maintain or reintegrate these workers into the workforce.

GENDER INEQUALITIES AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work during the pandemic continued to be highly segregated by gender. In 2021, more than half of the working population in the EU worked in occupations dominated by their own gender: nearly one third of the working population was men working in male-dominated occupations, while another quarter was women working in female-dominated occupations. Women and men working in mixed-gender occupations represented no more than one

quarter of the working population. Men working in female-dominated occupations and women working in male-dominated occupations represented 10 per cent and 8 per cent respectively of the total working population. **Glass ceilings persisted, with men continuing to predominate at the level of line manager** (two thirds of employees had a male boss in 2021).

Not only did women and men work in different workplaces but they also worked in different ways. On average, men in the EU spent nearly six hours per week more than women on paid work, while women spent 13 hours more on unpaid work than men. This resulted in women working – overall – seven hours more per week than men: the equivalent of an additional full working day. This uneven sharing of paid and unpaid work between men and women is reflected in the experience of work-life balance. A fifth of the workforce (slightly more men than women) reported poor

work-life balance. A quarter (more women than men) experienced work-life conflict, like feeling too tired after work to do household jobs, worrying about work when not working, or finding it difficult to concentrate on the job because of family responsibilities.

► *On average, men in the EU spent nearly six hours per week more than women on paid work, while women spent 13 hours more on unpaid work than men. This resulted in women working – overall – seven hours more per week than men: the equivalent of an additional full working day.*

The evidence of working time preferences expressed by workers is interesting in this context: 45 per cent of workers (43 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men) would favour an overall reduction in working hours; most would prefer to work normal weekly hours or slightly fewer. This is not surprising given that long working weeks – of six or seven days or of more than 40 hours – and a lack of flexibility to take time off to take care of personal matters continued to be the greatest barriers to a good work-life balance.

► *Nearly one third of employees worked in low-involvement organisations where they had limited autonomy over their work and limited possibilities to participate in organisational decision-making.*

Workers in quality jobs reported better work-life balance and fewer work-family conflicts. They also reported a better ability to make ends meet, a higher engagement at work, and greater trust and cooperation within workplaces. These links between good job quality and positive work-life outcomes reiterate the important role that the improvement of job quality can play in advancing policy goals beyond the realm of work.

some employment situations, as well as the representation and voice of workers, which is lacking for many employees. The EWCTS showed that nearly one third of employees worked in low-involvement organisations where they had limited autonomy over their work and limited possibilities to participate in organisational decision-making. A key lesson from the analysis of the EWCTS interviews is that **the foundation for a good working life remains the same as before the pandemic: job quality**. The fact that job quality is multidimensional, and that it is a combination of demands on the worker and the available resources, gives decision-makers at different levels plenty of scope for taking action through legislation, social dialogue and collective bargaining, or through company practices to improve different aspects of work. Whether curbing demands or boosting resources, the positive impact of these actions on workers' health, well-being and work-life balance is guaranteed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The world of work changed significantly during the pandemic. Many new areas for attention have emerged. Adapting to the various forms of hybrid work that have been developed is one of them. The pandemic also confirms lingering working life challenges, including the vulnerability of

*Agnès Parent-Thirion
is Senior Research
Manager in the Working
Life Unit at Eurofound*



MENTAL HEALTH IN THE EU



Mental health is recognised both as an intrinsic human right and as an invaluable resource by the EU. Together with the *Think-tank for Action on Social Change* (TASC), we examine the mental health systems of France, Ireland and Poland, the scale of mental health issues that have arisen during the pandemic, and the extent to which marginalised and at-risk groups receive targeted support.

WE CALL FOR AN EU MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY.



One is not born (un)productive, one becomes so

by Laeticia Thissen

Echoing the famous feminist mantra 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman', this article argues in a similar vein that 'one is not born (un)productive, but rather becomes so', to highlight the socially constructed and highly gendered dimension of the core economic concept of productivity.

At the beginning of a new year, many of us make promises to become our better selves. At this time, the seasonal section in bookstores hints at a common theme: the aspiration to constantly boost our personal productivity. While most new resolutions have good chances of remaining wishful thinking, the very notion of productivity is not free from controversy.

Beyond the often-misleading focus on sole individual responsibility for productivity, the notion of productivity raises serious questions of sustainability in the face of today's major societal challenges. From the climate emergency to the health, humanitarian and cost-of-living crises, these shocks, with all their adverse impacts, have simultaneously exposed the fragility of human existence. **Moreover, these co-existing crises are highly gendered due to pre-existing systemic inequalities.** This highlights the injustices behind our current scale of determining what and who can be considered 'productive'.

| WHOSE PRODUCTIVITY DO WE MEASURE?

The ubiquitous concept of 'productivity' might appear rather straightforward at first sight.

But the closer we look at it, the more complex it becomes. In general terms, after the Cambridge Dictionary, it refers to "the rate at which a person, company, or country does useful work". The OECD defines it as "the ratio between the volume of output and the volume of input(s) [to measure] how efficiently production inputs, such as labour and capital, are being used in an economy to produce a given level of output". Productivity can thus serve both as a measure of individual performance and of national economic growth based on internationally comparable indicators, such as the gross domestic product (GDP).

British feminist writer Caroline Criado Perez holds that this standard measure has a serious "woman problem". **It is well past the time to ponder the present-day legitimacy of a concept crafted for the foregone needs of a post-second world war era.** With the rise of the service economy, assessing the worth it creates outside the industrialised, market-based context, can be rather a tedious task: how do we measure the value of our time spent on writing emails, cleaning up our homes, caring for our elderly relatives or looking after a child? In Perez's view, we live in a world largely built by and for men, which systematically ignores half the population. As

a result, the work traditionally done by women simply does not count.

Among its many blind spots, GDP suffers a major bias: the exclusion of unpaid household services. In addition, service sectors which are (poorly) paid are still dominated by women who are overrepresented in activities for households (88 per cent), health and social work (78 per cent), education (72 per cent) and other service activities (64 per cent). Many forms of face-to-face services, typically care work, are hardly compatible with the logic of increasing productivity. What is more, productivity disregards a range of constitutive factors contributing to the real value of such services: trust, attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness and quality.

| IS PRODUCTIVITY ANTI-FEMINIST?

The concept of productivity is certainly far from neutral. This seemingly universal tool used to measure labour performance ignores the reality of women faced with a set of structural barriers: part-time work, interrupted career paths, sectoral gender segregation, under-/un-employment, stereotypes and

discrimination. This preoccupation has constituted a central tenet of early feminist research since the 1970s. A flourishing set of feminist literature has also emerged in recent years to shed light on what is now solid evidence: the hidden costs of productivity and the larger share born by subaltern groups, not only from a gender perspective but also from an age, race or class perspective.

Identifying patriarchy as the source of women's unequal position in society, materialist feminists – such as Christine Delphy or Simone de Beauvoir, to cite just two – framed gender as a social construct whereby society imposes gender roles, forcing women into domestic work. Italian-born feminist activist Silvia Federici, in turn, denounced the way modern societies neglect reproductive labour as not only unjust but also unsustainable. This term, coined in contrast to productive labour, indicates "all the work that we do that is sustaining", as she has been quoted in the New York Times. Being productive thus rests on a set of surrounding preconditions: being well-fed, clean, safe and healthy. It is work done over and over again. **Asking "who cooked Adam Smith's dinner?", Swedish author Katrine Marçal cunningly questioned the ability of the father of modern economics to have developed his 'invisible hand' theory had it not been for his mother's 'invisible heart' taking care of her son.** Similarly, care ethicist Joan Tronto states that it is merely due to a specific constellation of caring relationships and welfare if some people have a sense of autonomy. Each 'productive' hour of work thus requires a certain amount of unpaid or poorly paid work. This is what writer and speaker on the future of work Laetitia Vitaud terms the "hidden part of the productivity iceberg".

Furthermore, promoting the individualisation of productivity overshadows collective merit. Women shine less by their 'productivity' because the thankless tasks rest largely on their shoulders while men thrive in their individuality. At home, the falling gender employment gap has hardly resulted in an erosion of traditional gender



© Daniskim / Shutterstock.com

norms. While data suggest that Europeans support feminist values, actual behaviours point to the contrary. **While men in the EU spend on average close to 15 hours on unpaid work per week, for women it is 30 hours.** Even if men engage in paid work to greater extents, women have longer total working weeks when cumulating paid and unpaid work. The resulting unpaid care penalty is estimated at around €242 billion per year. At work, the distribution of work mirrors similar patterns: most of the non-promotable work ends up on women's laps (social activities for example, or writing the minutes of meetings, logistical work, preparing coffee, etc). The fact that these tasks are important is undeniable, but their unequal distribution is problematic.

TOWARDS A SUBSTANTIVE VISION OF EQUALITY

Instead of taking the 'male standard' of productivity for granted, a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities calls for a profound deconstruction of the inequality gaps behind this sexist concept of productivity. **Rather than solely placing monetary value on the production of goods, a new and more sustainable paradigm would cherish, as write in Berenic Fisher and Joao Tronto write in *Circles of Care*: "everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible" as a central societal concern.** Overcoming the Aristotelian principle of "likes should be treated

alike', this new paradigm would also assume the quest for a more egalitarian social contract rooted in substantive equality. This implies a four-dimensional transformative approach focused on breaking the cycle of disadvantage through redistribution, ensuring human dignity, accommodating difference through social transformation, and achieving structural change through social inclusion. The quest for such an approach finds particular resonance in the face of the growing (yet piecemeal) engagement of EU law with care(rs). **Future efforts need to rebalance the relationship between paid and unpaid work to foster well-being through the further enhancement of the work-life balance and the actionable valorisation of care work.** To date, economic and fiscal policies remain blind to this gap. The EU's recovery plan, where marginal attention is devoted to improving the working conditions of (un)paid care workers or to accessibility to care infrastructures, clearly exemplifies the failure to take this urgent need more seriously. In order to give value back to social ties and to eliminate stigma around work(ers) traditionally perceived as unproductive, a good resolution to pursue might be to first learn to see productivity through feminist eyes.

Laetitia Thissen,
Policy Analyst on
Gender Equality, FEPS



The domestic and home care sector: answering the structural weakness of care systems in the EU member states

by Aude Boisseuil

Structuring the domestic and home care sector is the only way to reach the European Care Strategy targets of quality, affordability and accessibility of care services.

In its Care Strategy, released in September 2022, the European Commission recognises the role of home care and community-based services in the care policy mix, and the role of informal carers in responding to care needs in the European Union.

The domestic and home care sector – or as the European Commission calls it, 'Personal and Household Services' (PHS) – provides essential services enabling elderly people to pursue a good and dignified life, in their own homes, and to remain actors of their life. PHS help them to carry out activities of daily living (direct care activities), to remain socially active and to maintain bonds with their family and community. Furthermore, PHS also contribute to the instrumental activities of daily life (indirect care activities), allowing the care recipients to have a good living environment in their own homes. The combination of both direct and indirect care work allows people in need of care to be totally comfortable in their own

homes, and their place of living is taken into equal consideration. In the area of childcare, childminders and childcare workers at home take care of young children's care needs, be it full-time care from birth to three years old, or after-school care for older children.

Domestic and home care will be key to meeting the care needs in Europe in the coming decades. Usually highly stigmatised and prone to stereotypes, the sector still suffers from a lack of recognition. A real change in mentality is needed for this recognition. Indeed, the sector deserves to be valued again, and deserves acknowledgment for its high societal, social and economic value. More attractive jobs in the sector will be key to responding to the lack of labour force, which is mainly due to poor working conditions and the retirement of domestic and care workers. **The care sector, and more specifically domestic and home care services, are also faced with high levels of undeclared work. Furthermore, because**

of high labour costs and the lack of public investment, the sector cannot develop to its full potential in the formal labour market.

Households choose not to declare domestic and care workers when the employment prices for undeclared work are significantly more affordable than those on the declared market. However, having professional PHS

► *The care sector, and more specifically domestic and home care services, are also faced with high levels of undeclared work. Furthermore, because of high labour costs and the lack of public investment, it cannot develop to its full potential in the formal labour market.*



© Phovoir / Shutterstock.com

workers provide home care for people in need of long-term care and support can enable informal carers to better balance their work-life balance and allow women – who often undertake such caring responsibilities – to return to, or enter, the labour market.

► *Currently, parents in many EU countries resort to undeclared work because they do not have access to diversified childcare arrangements, and they need to find solutions fitting with their work-life balance and care needs.*

As far as childcare is concerned, most parents need diversification of childcare arrangements: both collective and individual childcare should be structured, developed, affordable and implemented to respond to parents' needs. **Currently, parents in many EU countries resort to undeclared work because they**

do not have access to diversified childcare arrangements, and they need to find solutions fitting with their work-life balance and care needs. Individual childcare arrangements represent a third option between collective childcare and women at home taking care of their children. This is a complementary tailor-made solution adaptable to parents with night shifts or long, early and late working hours, which are not covered by collective childcare facilities. This is particularly the case for parents working in the medical and health-care sector themselves. But **allowing parents to directly hire childminders or childcare workers of their choice through direct employment can increase women's participation in the labour market.** It would also help create declared jobs with social rights in the sector. Yet, for this to happen, investment is needed in the development and adaptation of the essential skills required to ensure quality, especially to meet the challenges of educating very young children at home.

The European Care Strategy is the first positive step towards the provision of this childcare. Member states must now implement this strategy in their national action, and must consider how the domestic and home care sector can

► *Allowing parents to directly hire childminders or childcare workers of their choice through direct employment can increase women's participation in the labour market..*

reach the objectives of affordability, quality and accessibility of care services in the coming decades.

PHS stakeholders are not sufficiently organised and recognised at the moment. This hinders the development of a virtuous approach towards the aim of raising qualifications, training requirements and wages, improving working conditions and health and safety at work, and strengthening sectoral collective bargaining. These goals will only be possible with the support of member states to promote the capacity building of national social partners in the PHS sector.



Aude Boisseuil,
General Delegate of the
European Federation
for Family Employment
and Home Care (EFFE)



Never be afraid of making mistakes

Interview with Jamila Madeira,
by Ania Skrzypek

Jamila Madeira is a member of the National Assembly in Portugal and the International Secretary of the Portuguese Socialist Party. She was a member of the European Parliament, Secretary General of the Socialist Youth in Portugal, and also a very prominent member of both the International Union of Socialist Youth and the Young European Socialist Bureaus and Praesidium.

Ania Skrzypek: Many of us in Europe look at Portugal with envy. We are a year on from the landslide victory in the general election, and we are a year on from when you moved from a left-wing coalition government (that was already the subject of much curiosity in Europe) to a government of the Socialist Party alone. What are the secret ingredients of this Portuguese success?

Jamila Madeira: We never say we have the perfect recipe – we always see it as imperfect! And that's the key to our success: we don't assume we know everything. We don't have all the answers. With each step that we go further towards a fairer society and more progressive policies, we try to evaluate if we're truly getting closer to our goals. We are never afraid of making mistakes because we are always ready to change and correct ourselves. **We learned during the pandemic that we do not know everything about what is happening.**

We want to increase salaries, in both the public and the private sectors. To do this, we needed a dialogue with the social partners.

And yet we know that the compromise found in this dialogue won't accomplish everything. If it does not work as intended, we assume we must change it again. The worst thing for a politician is to believe that we know everything. We accept that we make mistakes but don't give up and keep trying, proposing a different solution that will help employment – even though we have an absolute majority in parliament. We have now made a social agreement with the private sector for the first time, to increase the average salary. That's something that we had been targeting, having already done the same with the minimum wage for the public sector. We have made an agreement with the private sector for four years, so that salaries will increase on average by 5.1 per cent per year. We made the same agreement with the public sector, especially with public sector unions, because this was also about those average salaries that shrank by comparison due to a minimum salary that was increased by law. We need to compensate these people. I think the secret is speaking the truth. Sometimes it's hard to communicate because the press

always assumes that we have some hidden agenda. But our Prime Minister and Secretary-General António Costa is ready to go and speak directly to people and with companies all around the country, assuming that there are other perspectives we did not consider when conceiving this law or that measure. So, the next time we will try to work out how to solve the remaining problems. **What is important is speaking the truth and truly trying to solve the problems of our economy – the problems felt by families, problems of discrimination, the gender gap, and low salaries. We know that society is complex. If something does not work, let's try again – assuming it did not work because the theory is one thing, but the practice is another.** The key to our success is being in touch with reality – we truly listen to what people are saying because they obviously have different perspectives. We really need to put ourselves in other people's shoes to understand and see how best to bring these various perspectives together to make things work. And this approach always helps, no matter which sector we are working on.

► *What is important is speaking the truth and truly trying to solve the problems of our economy – the problems felt by families, problems of discrimination, the gender gap, and low salaries. We know that society is complex. If something does not work, let's try again – assuming it did not work because the theory is one thing, but the practice is another.*



© Ricardolamy / Shutterstock.com

AS: *When the Socialist Party first took over government, it was at a very critical time, when Portugal was ruined by austerity policies. There was a narrative that we could not afford a welfare state anymore. But we have been in the midst of crises ever since – in particular the recent energy and cost-of-living crises. How did the Socialist government manage to reassure people that the welfare state, social policy and public goods provision are not only affordable and possible, but actually a necessity?*

JM: We started with the goal of keeping all debts and deficits fully stabilised and controlled. First, we gave back what was cut from people's pay during the era of the 'troika', and we focused in particular on the people who were living in the hardest conditions. This was a move forward for the economy, which was quite critical because the people on lower pay are the people who consume almost everything they earn. So this move had a critical multiplier effect on the economy. As well as increasing these people's quality of life, the increase in their pay had an enormous impact on the economy. This was very

important. Second, the support to companies was also very important, with new areas of development that could bring added value. Today we have a digital economy that is much more developed. Our development is now based much more on research. We have moved from a labour force-intense economy to a completely different approach. **We are also following the lines the European Union and our Socialist family gave us for a greener economy. We put a big focus on energy. We are changing tack in terms of energy consumption, and we are changing in terms of what our industry does in this regard.** Obviously, we still have a long way to go regarding transport, which is not only a Portuguese problem but one for the whole EU, as we are mainly focused on cars. In a way, it is as if we have brought back the era of our industrial revolution and made it happen again in the 21st century. Obviously, we carefully watch tourism, which carries an enormous weight in our economy. But we are also trying to diversify, to prevent the problems we had during the pandemic – because when tourism stopped, the entire economy stopped, which was a nightmare.

AS: *It's perhaps premature to speak about the 2024 European elections, but they are just around the corner. You are a member of the leadership of the Party of European Socialists, and you have a great deal of experience with many European debates given the very different hats you wear and have worn. I know it's hard to predict, but how do you see the next 18 months from the perspective of the Portuguese Socialists? What should the European Socialist Party focus on to be successful in its campaign and to help Europe become more progressive in the future?*

JM: As I said at the beginning, **we must talk with people and find answers to their problems. Even if they ask for simple things that have no simple answers. We must try again and again. We must start now because it will be too late when we are closer to the European elections.** We have a tremendous challenge ahead of us, with a war on our continent. And we must engage to be able to overcome all the problems that will arise after the war. **We need to come back to what people really want to improve their quality of life: better pay, better schools, more**



health services, more social help when they are in need, and a European social security system that can help them when they are unemployed. We need to work together as a Union and not as 27 separate member states – because sometimes people do not understand what Europe is there for. As Socialists, it is our role to deliver from day one on what people really want to see answered.

AS: *We have a moral obligation to stand up against the rise of right-wing extremism and against all the forces that are anti-EU and anti-democracy. In Portugal, the history of the Carnation Revolution is not that old. How come these anti-democracy forces have gained ground even in Portugal? And what strategy can we adopt to prevent these forces from advancing even further?*

JM: That's the million-dollar question! When there are problems, the far right grows faster, because it has easy-looking answers to people's problems. The far right makes it look as if the government does not solve people's problems because it doesn't want to solve them. The far right spreads simplistic messages, and sometimes people are tired of waiting and go with these simplistic messages. But if we don't truly show what this wolf in sheep's clothing is doing to people, we will have tremendous problems. If we look back to what happened in the early 20th century with the growth of the far right, we see what may happen today if we don't stop their current rise properly. But they are clever and effective and mix issues: they speak about chemical castration and a minute later, they claim they are here to defend the welfare state and the well-being of animals. They give the appearance of normal parties, but they are not normal. And we know that. They want to make people believe they are

normal – but they are not democratic. We cannot normalise them. We have to find ways not to normalise them, because if they find themselves in power, there will be tremendous consequences for citizens, for the political parties, for the whole of democracy.

AS: *You have spoken a few times about the importance of remaining connected, and you have said that the most important thing is to listen to people, to have character and integrity, and to correct yourselves whenever necessary. As I do not want to finish on a pessimistic note, could you share a story with us that could be an encouragement?*

JM: Our best story is the revolution of the minimum wage. You can't even imagine the figures when we started in government. **We had a minimum wage of €485 per month, and now it stands at €760 – which is still very much below the minimum wage we wanted to achieve. In these seven years in government, we have managed to really change the lives of those people who live in very difficult conditions.** In the current budget, we have enabled people whose wages are just above €760 not to be taxed. These people are protected because if they were taxed, they would have less than the minimum wage. We have changed these people's lives and have almost doubled their wages from the day we started in government. They come to us and say, 'my life has completely changed'. Even though I still have many expectations for how our government can improve social welfare, this 'my life has completely changed' really reassures us that we are on the right track, even if it is just one step along the way. We try every day. Every day we make mistakes, and every day we try to correct them. And this is something that makes us feel good and makes us feel strong enough to continue.

► *We had a minimum wage of €485 per month, and now it stands at €760 – which is still below the minimum wage we wanted to achieve. In these seven years in government we have managed to really change the lives of those people who live in very difficult conditions.*

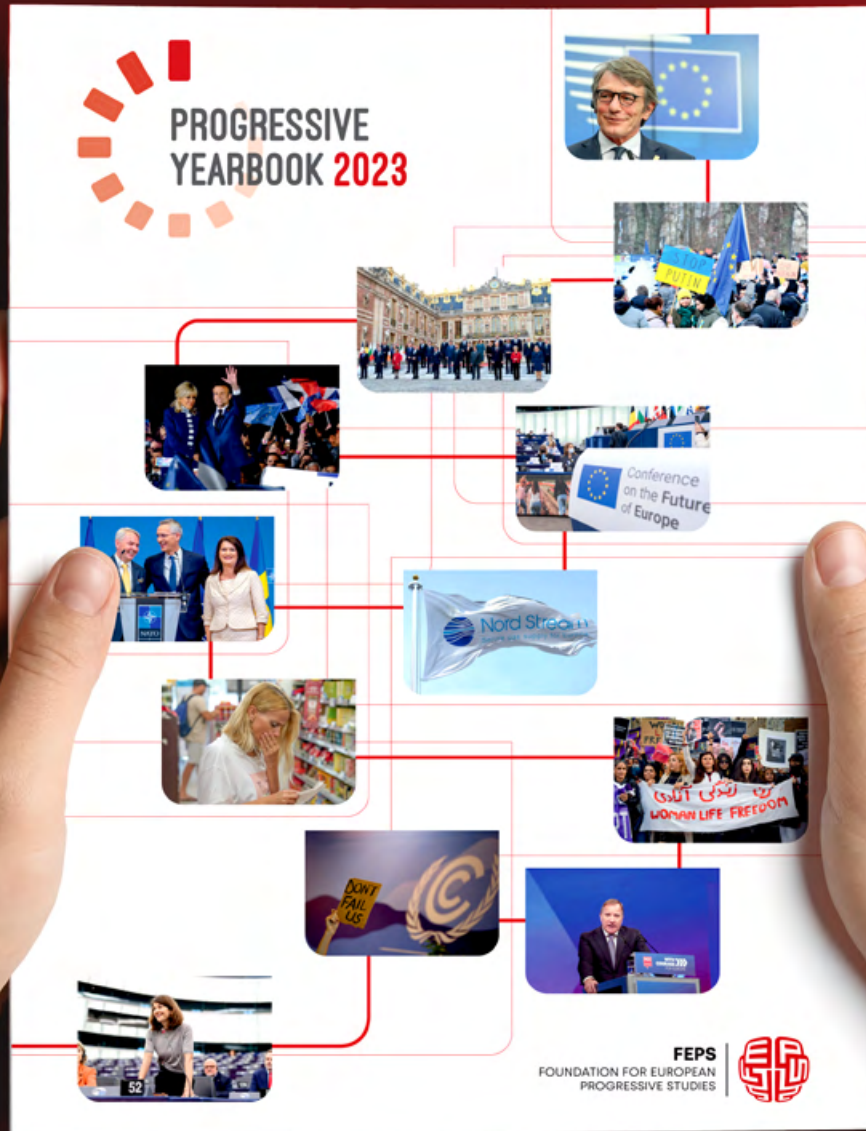
*Jamila Madeira,
member of the National
Assembly in Portugal,
International Secretary of the
Portuguese Socialist Party*



*Ania Skrzypek,
FEPS Director for
Research and Training*



Progressive Yearbook 2023



With the mission of bringing forward analyses of the key political developments of the year, the Progressive Yearbook focuses on transversal European issues that have left a mark on 2022, and brings insightful future-looking analysis for the new year.

200 years of enriching the few and failing the many

by Howard Reed



Stewart Lansley

*The Richer, The Poorer:
How Britain Enriched the Few and Failed the Poor*

.....
Bristol Policy Press, 2022

Stewart Lansley's *The Richer, The Poorer* is an ambitiously potted history of poverty and inequality in the UK which condenses more than 200 years of British political economy into little more than 250 pages.

The book is divided into five sections: 1800-1939 (the 19th century Poor Law and workhouse era, and the birth of the welfare state with the establishment of the National Insurance in 1911), 1940-1959 (the expansion of the welfare state in the post-war settlement), 1960-1979 ('peak equality' and the breakdown of post-war consensus), 1980-1996 (the Thatcherite assault on welfare), 1997-2010 (a renewed focus on poverty under New Labour) and 2011-2020 (a renewed assault on the poor under Conservative-led governments). The long-term scope of the book is particularly welcome as it shows that inequality and poverty in Britain have followed a U-shaped pattern, which Lansley calls a "long high inequality, high poverty cycle". The 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed extreme inequalities in income and wealth, which were

greatly reduced in the post-war welfare state era, only to increase again in the 1980s, as Thatcherism reduced income tax rates and cut the real-terms value of welfare support, while earnings inequality exploded.

► *Lansley presents the progress in reducing poverty and inequality between 1945 and 1979 as an island of Social Democratic achievements stranded between prior and subsequent expanses of Social Darwinist laissez-faire.*

Lansley presents the progress in reducing poverty and inequality between 1945 and 1979 as an island of Social Democratic achievements stranded between prior and subsequent expanses of Social Darwinist laissez-faire. While this picture overstates the extent to which developments since 1979 have

taken us back to the plutocratic pre-war era (the scope and size of public spending and tax receipts as a share of GDP in the 2020s remain much higher than in the 1930s), the increases in poverty and inequality over the 1980s in particular are real and undeniable. Also undeniable – and disconcerting – are the echoes of 19th century reactionary rhetoric regarding the poor in the political discourse from the 1980s onwards, and particularly in the post-2010 era. 19th century commentators "pointed to a failure of character or moral weakness, with poor families complicit in their own fate"; the rhetoric of most government ministers since 1979 (even New Labour, to some extent) has played up to this caricature, especially the post-2010 "troubled families" strategy which suggested that poverty was essentially due to the immoral and criminal behaviour of the poor. Alongside this, Britain's overwhelmingly right-wing print media has had a key role to play in the monstering of benefit claimants, from the rising wave of 'scrounger' stories in the pre-Thatcher era through the attacks on disabled benefit claimants and lone mothers in the 2000s and 2010s.

The increasing toughness of the conditionality, work-search conditions and the rapidly rising incidence of sanctions in the benefit system in recent years, with the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) administration of Universal Credit often seeming like a Kafkaesque endeavour to trip claimants up and deny them help at any opportunity, echoes the harshness and brutality of the 19th century workhouse regime.

► *The manifest inadequacies of the current welfare state settlement, as well as the intergenerational unfairness of that settlement, may create a space for more radical reforms in the medium term.*

Inevitably, a book of this length on such a broad topic has to leave out a lot of the messy detail, and Lansley makes wise choices regarding what to focus on. **Britain's model of extractive capitalism – with asset-stripping and property speculation so often an easier way to make profits than technological innovation and productive investments – comes in for justifiable criticism, and is shown to be driving the explosion of rewards at the very top end of the income and wealth distribution post-1980** (not captured well in household surveys, but illustrated better by the *Sunday Times Rich List* and CEO remuneration reports). The development of the post-war anti-poverty lobby – particularly the Child Poverty Action Group, and the experiences of individual benefit claimants are also woven tightly into the narrative, humanising the book and making it an arresting read.

There are only a few omissions of importance. Local taxation – and in particular the replacement of domestic rates with the more regressive Council Tax in 1993 (after the disastrous experiment of the flat-rate Community Charge or 'poll tax') – is not much discussed. The extraordinary bias of the British tax system in favour of property wealth, via the exemption of house price gains on primary residences from income or capital gains tax, and the consequent elevation of house prices into a national obsession for the shrinking proportion of adults able to afford a mortgage, probably merited more attention. Finally, in my view, the Blair and Brown administrations of 1997-2010, while in retrospect far too wedded to sustaining the financialised 1980s model of British capitalism, did achieve more than they are often given credit for: the establishment of a national minimum wage for the first time in British history; the establishment of formalised relative child poverty targets (based on 60 per cent of equivalised net household incomes); significant real-terms increases in expenditure on key public services such as health and education; and real terms increases in social security payments for families with children, in particular. It is notable that despite the British media portraying Labour under Jeremy Corbyn's 2015-2020 leadership as 'hard left', the Labour manifestos of 2017 and 2019 were less radical on social security policy than New Labour, with not even a commitment to raising benefit levels in real terms.

Sadly, the short-term prospects for reductions in poverty or inequality in the UK through tax and benefit policy are dismal. The conservative government is committed to further austerity and tougher sanctions on claimants, and Corbyn has now been replaced by Keir Starmer, who risks amplifying the most reactionary elements of conservative policy to appease the right-wing media. However, **as Lansley rightly points out, the manifest inadequacies of the current welfare state settlement, as well as the intergenerational unfairness of that settlement (with the Conservatives relying increasingly heavily**

on a pensioner vote that is gradually dying off), may create a space for more radical reforms in the medium term.

Universal Basic Income – a guaranteed payment to every adult and child in the UK to construct a 'plimsoll line' for incomes below which no one should fall – is an appealing option to mend the holes in the current threadbare welfare safety net, and is popular with large sections of public opinion. Similarly, Universal Basic Services would extend the principles of universal provision in the National Health Service and the school system to other areas including public transport, broadband internet access and childcare. While Covid-19 did not result in permanent enhancements to the social security system, it has shown that the government can step in at very short notice to provide extensive support for incomes when the situation is seen as enough of a crisis. **The current levels of child and working-age poverty in the UK are a – largely unheralded – crisis which requires radical action and root-and-branch reforms of the taxation of income and wealth to fund a welfare settlement for the mid-21st century.** As momentum for fundamental reform builds, it is to be hoped that future generations will look back at this excellent book as chronicling a low point in the post-1980 history of welfare state provision, after which things started to improve.

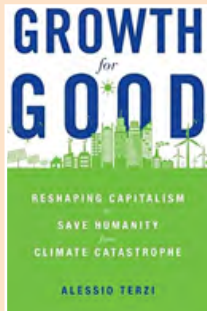


Howard Reed,
Director of the economic
research consultancy
Landman Economics



Green growth for good – can capitalism save the planet?

by Lucas Resende Carvalho



Alessio Terzi

*Growth for Good:
Reshaping Capitalism to Save Humanity
from Climate Catastrophe*

.....
Harvard University Press, 2022

Growth for Good – Reshaping Capitalism to Save Humanity from Climate Catastrophe by Alessio Terzi is the culmination of an intellectual journey that started with the question of whether the continuous pursuit of economic growth can be compatible with a sustainable way of living within planetary boundaries. This question, developed during a dinner conversation in 2007, has followed the author, an economist at the European Commission and lecturer at Sciences Po (Lille), ever since. His longstanding preoccupation with the topic is reflected by the far-reaching and multidisciplinary approach of the book.

To demonstrate that growth is not just a feature of capitalism, but innate to every society, Terzi ventures into the historic origins of capitalism, industrialisation, consumerism and human nature itself. He does so in a compelling manner, meticulously engaging with many arguments put forward by the advocates of degrowth, who reject the compatibility between the capitalist-bred growth imperative and climate stability.

After a sweeping attack on the degrowth movement in the first part of the book, Terzi follows up with a blueprint for turning his vision of green and social capitalism into reality. He then draws up an ambitious yet persuasive plan of how to harness the forces of capitalism for the fight against climate change and in favour of social justice.

► *Terzi argues that economic growth is not necessarily intertwined with natural resource exploitation and socio-economic stratification, but that it very much depends on how and for which purpose it is generated.*

Human activities, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, are the primary cause of the rise in global temperatures. These actions are currently driven by the pursuit of economic growth, which has been the major contributor to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions. To significantly reduce emissions, the world must either rapidly decouple emissions from economic growth, or accept a reduction in GDP. This dichotomy produces contrasting views on how our economic system should evolve from where we are now. Widespread disenchantment with the current state of capitalism – which is currently exploiting nature and labour to unsustainable degrees – has given rise to a variety of movements which either reject growth, or which argue that the pursuit of capitalism will inevitably come to an end due to natural resource limits being on the cusp of depletion.

Terzi is among those who disagree with this diagnosis. **He argues that economic growth is not necessarily intertwined with natural resource exploitation and socio-economic**

stratification, but that it very much depends on how and for which purpose it is generated. In his view, by finding the right mix of policies, through international cooperation and by guaranteeing the involvement of societal stakeholders in the process, growth can be embedded in an economic system that is sustainable, equitable and inclusive. To prove this, **he examines what he perceives as the major misconceptions of the degrowth movement and describes how they originated from the discontent with the downsides of modern capitalism.** He quarrels with environmental economists' normative visions of the future, which he claims are based on their personal beliefs rather than impartial analysis of reality. He states that the supposedly compulsive pursuit of economic growth emanating from modern capitalism is often framed as the root cause of larger social issues such as inequality, colonialism, patriarchy, racism and excessive consumption.

► *Terzi's lengthy critique of degrowth should not give the impression that he dismisses its concerns. Quite the opposite, as there is much common ground to be found between both sides.*

But for Terzi, these are merely the symptoms of an erroneous economic design that can be fixed. He argues that "economic growth is a result of human desires, rather than a top-down imposition by capitalism on otherwise indifferent individuals. The quest for more will endure as long as humans populate the planet, whether we tear down capitalism or not" (p. 130). Accordingly, the desire for more is what

historically has allowed humanity to make tremendous leaps in well-being and prosperity. This exercise in socio-economic history is also one of the strongest points of the book as it allows the reader to understand the role of growth as a driver of industrial transformations, and it convincingly refutes the degrowth narrative of capitalism as an inevitably voracious growth model linked to consumerism and resource exploitation.

Yet Terzi's lengthy critique of degrowth should not give the impression that he dismisses its concerns. Quite the opposite, as there is much common ground to be found between both sides. He shares the perception with degrowth advocates that the way economic growth is currently generated is fundamentally flawed and that measurements of prosperity must also include indicators that assess environmental and social welfare. In addition, Terzi addresses issues of growing inequality at length, and he states that this inequality is fuelled by the current state of capitalism. However, rather than forgoing growth, the solution would be to transform the way that economic value is generated and distributed across society. Again, resorting to historical analysis, he argues that such transformations of the mode of production are a central theme across the stages of humanity's evolution. Confronted with hardship, humankind has always found ways to recalibrate the tools of production and ultimately produce progress. He states that the "history of humanity is a succession of such turning points, where civilizations have stayed off the crisis of the moment through the instruments made available by technology in the pursuit of self-determination" (p.225).

Terzi is convinced that innovation, as the motor of growth, is the key to overcoming the current dire planetary situation without risking extreme social and material deprivation. And because of human ingenuity's ability to adapt and reinvent, growth has never been tied to the use of a specific resource. Constraints to growth are therefore social and not related to the scarcity of material inputs: "Innovation, and

therefore economic growth, will not run out of materials, because the very definition of a production material depends on what is available. This is something we have observed throughout human history. Societies solve problems using what they have on hand" (p.155).

► *Terzi is convinced that innovation, as the motor of growth, is the key to overcoming the current dire planetary situation without risking extreme social and material deprivation.*

Ultimately, for Terzi, the transformation towards a better economic model will always stem from human ingenuity that is spurred by everyone's desire for more. The 'invisible hand', that is the price-mechanism, will then steer innovation towards optimal pathways (in this case zero-carbon technology). These assumptions resonate with common classical economic narratives that have often sounded attractive but that have never worked out that well in practice. However, Terzi is far from being a neoliberal market-apologist, and neither does he blindly trust technological advances unconditionally. He emphasises the need for a pronounced role of the government to actively kickstart and promote the right innovation processes for a 'green industrial revolution', while also defending certain protectionist measures for emerging green industries (a topic now more relevant than ever against the backdrop of the huge American Inflation Reduction Act). These large-scale government programmes should be financed by debt issuance in the short term – for which Terzi draws parallels to the unprecedented fiscal packages that helped mitigate the Covid crisis.

In the long-term, he favours so-called double-dividend policies that reduce climate change and environmental pollution while generating public income in the form of taxes and cap-and-trade revenues, which would imply a global coordination and the fight against tax havens. **However, he falls short of explaining how to achieve such a degree of global coordination in an increasingly multipolar world order.**

► *Ultimately, for Terzi, the transformation towards a better economic model will always stem from human ingenuity that is spurred by everyone's desire for more.*

At times one wishes that Terzi would dwell just a little longer on points that deserve more attention – like the role of global finance, which is barely discussed beyond its role as price-setter. Considering that financialisation is the dominating trait of modern capitalism, exploring the role of financial institutions for the sustainable transformation of the economy – such as institutional investors and the financialisation of non-financial companies, as well as the deeper possibilities of green finance – would have been an avenue worth pursuing in greater depth. Another point that lacks further elaboration is the perspective of the Global South. **The Global South is not only more severely affected by climate change, but it also lacks infrastructure and financial capabilities – while bearing the least historical responsibility for the current situation.** The current dysfunctional economic model that Terzi aspires to transform was built in the global North, and dealing with the developmental implications is of crucial importance

for the way ahead. Terzi acknowledges that he focuses primarily on developed countries (and on Europe in particular), and he emphasises that there might be different solutions given the various local contexts. But the lack of a deeper Global South perspective is certainly a point of contention in his otherwise thorough assessment.

Overall, ***Growth for Good* is a thought-provoking state-of-the-art depiction of the cleavages between our economic model, society and the fight against climate change.** With his clear and concise analysis, Terzi makes a refreshingly holistic but pragmatic contribution to a debate that is riddled with normative and idealistic theories. Even more importantly, the book provides a tangible agenda for how governments, businesses and citizens can work together to transform capitalism into a force for good.

*Lucas Resende Carvalho,
Junior Project Manager at
the Bertelsmann Stiftung
in the Europe's Future
programme, and blogger
on globaleurope.eu*



ABORTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

ACTORS, ISSUES AND DISCOURSE



Bérengère Marques-Pereira

FEPS
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES



RI RennerInstitut

Europe is the continent where access to safe and legal abortion is closest to the international health recommendations, but this right is being seriously challenged. Attempts to restrict access remind us that the right to abortion is reversible. This book compares the legal regime of abortion in different EU countries and the effectiveness of the right to access it.

Read this original and comparative look at the discourses and practices of abortion rights.

"Never forget that it only takes a political, economic or religious crisis for women's rights to be called into question. These rights can never be taken for granted. You must remain vigilant throughout your life."

Simone de Beauvoir

Discover our latest issues: progressivepost.eu



The Progressive Post



N°21 - Spring 2023

FEPS
FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES



Avenue des Arts, 46
1000 Brussels - Belgium
+32 (0)2 234 69 00
info@feps-europe.eu
www.feps-europe.eu

ISSN 2506-7362

3.00 €