

# Women in Times of Crisis: Rethinking the Extraordinary and the Everyday

## An introductory literature review

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## **Introduction**

The terror attacks of September 11, 2001, will long be remembered as the brutal beginning of the 21st century in the United States, and perhaps in other parts of the world, notably in the “West” (defined here as countries in North America and Europe). These attacks were the first in a series of events which have led many in the US and the West to feel that they are living permanently with crises. Some of these crises are “time-limited crises” like wars, the global financial crisis (GFC) and the Covid pandemic. Others are “persistent states of crisis” (the word “crisis” usually referring to a temporary situation), such as the challenge of migration (often linked to war and extreme economic plight), and the existential threat of climate change. These persistent states of crisis also include entrenched structural socio-economic difficulties faced by many countries in the West – and elsewhere – such as (public) indebtedness and the national populist menace to democracy, spearheaded by men.

This literature review aims to provide an initial contribution to the analysis of the “work done” by crises and how they impact women in particular, the theme of this project. To this end, Section 1 has three aims. Firstly, it aims – somewhat immodestly – to give a broader overview of crises in recent decades, extending beyond the West, and going back in time to examine key turning points/crises in the second half of the 20th century. This helps secondly to provide some ideas about the differences between crises that are political, economic or driven by armed conflict. Thirdly, Section 1 seeks to feed the literature review by referencing (some) key analyses of these crises. The next section summarises the main characteristics of a selection of case studies of crises and how they have impacted women. Section 3 then discusses some common elements of how crises operate and their consequences on women.

## **Section 1: Crises across the World, Past and Present**

Looked at from a Western – and certainly a European – perspective, the 21st century contrasts with what could be called the “Great Peace” of the second half of the 20th century. To be sure, in the early decades of the post-World War II world, the West was involved in numerous brutal post-colonial wars in the Third World: for example, the Korean War (1950-1953), the Malayan War of Liberation from Britain (1948-1960), the Mau Mau rebellion also against Britain (1952-1960) in Kenya, and Algerian War of Independence against France (1954-1962), as well as the successive wars by France and the United States (US) in Indochina from the 1950s to the 1970s. Similarly, the US repeatedly interfered in a whole host of countries to preserve its interests and in its superpower rivalry with the Soviet Union (backing coups notably in Iran (1953) and in Chile (1973)). However, Europe and the rest of Asia – the terrible battlegrounds of the first half of the 20th century – remained largely at peace, though haunted by the spectre of nuclear war during the Cold War.

### *Peace and war in the 1990s*

With the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the global picture seemed to brighten further. The Third World Debt Crisis, which had blighted the development of Latin America and Africa throughout the 1980s, had more or less been stabilised, albeit at considerable social cost. Both continents faced successive waves of structural adjustment

programmes and economic liberalisation imposed by the IMF, the World Bank and the US Treasury – a policy package that became known as the “Washington Consensus”.<sup>4</sup> The terrible war launched by Iraq in 1980 against the Islamic Republic of Iran had also ended by 1988, and when the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989, Eastern Europe transitioned rapidly to democracy – largely peacefully – by the end of the year. There was then talk by the US of creating a New World Order, especially when an international coalition was being successfully marshalled to free Kuwait, after its invasion by Iraq in August 1990.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, many, like the historian Walter Russell Mead wryly noted how this order was – as ever – yet another reflection of Anglo-American puritanism trying to sort out the world in its own interests.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History* thesis, first published shortly before the Berlin Wall fell, seemed partial to say the least, by arguing that humanity had essentially reached its destination, as nations across the globe were converging on Western liberal democracy.<sup>7</sup> Still, it was an optimistic age for the West and other parts of the world, if marred by AIDS (most terribly in Southern Africa), and the 1990s have been referred to as “a holiday from history”.<sup>8</sup> Democracy had indeed already replaced military dictatorships in Latin America during the 1980s, and was making gains in Africa. Miraculously, Nelson Mandela was released from jail in 1990, and South Africa moved from Apartheid to democracy by 1994. There was even hope of a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, based on the Oslo Accords of 1993.

Yet for all the insouciance that the end of the Cold War and its ensuing “peace dividend” in military spending brought to the US and most of Europe, total horror was never far away. Primetime TV broadcast an incongruent mix of heroines and heroes fighting paranormal monsters (in cult series like *X-Files*, *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), along with images of the unfolding disaster of Yugoslavia descending into chaos, war and “ethnic cleansing”. There, Muslim men and boys were killed in large numbers by (Orthodox Christian) ethnic Serbs, while “an estimated 20,000 women endured sexual assaults in the form of torture and rape” in “rape camps”.<sup>9</sup> So too we watched, wringing our hands, at what has widely been described as the “fastest mass-killing” or genocide in history: in 100 days in spring 1994, Rwanda’s Hutu population set upon the country’s Tutsis, exterminating at the very least 500,000 people.<sup>10</sup> Again, rape and sexual violence occurred against women on a truly staggering scale – perhaps as many as 250,000 to 500,000 cases – as “women were individually raped, gang-raped, raped with objects such as sharpened sticks or gun barrels, held in sexual slavery (either collectively or through forced “marriage”) or sexually mutilated”.<sup>11</sup> The refugee crisis which resulted from this genocide subsequently destabilised eastern Congo, leading to decades of ongoing armed conflict and extreme violence against women

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<sup>4</sup> John Williamson, “[A Short History of the Washington Consensus](#)”, Petersen Institute for International Economics, September 24, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> George H. W. Bush (President), “[Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit](#)”, September 11, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Mead explains ironically and trenchantly how British and American, puritan desire to do good in the world invariably masks blatant self-interest. Walter Russell Mead, *God and Gold: Britain, America and the Making of the Modern World*, London, Atlantic Books, 2007, pp 42-82.

<sup>7</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “[The End of History](#)”, *The National Interest*, Summer 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Freedland, “[The 90s: A Holiday from History](#)”, *Archive on 4*, BBC Radio 4, 27 Nov 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Todd A. Salzman, “[Rape Camps as a Means of Ethnic Cleansing: Religious, Cultural, and Ethical Responses to Rape Victims in Former Yugoslavia](#)”, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 20, 1998, pp 340-378.

<sup>10</sup> *The Economist*, “[Thirty years after Rwanda, genocide is still a problem from hell](#)”, April 3, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Binaifer Nowrojee, “[SHATTERED LIVES: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath](#)”, Human Rights Watch, September 1996.

(see below). In *Worse than War*, Holocaust scholar Daniel Goldhagen examines Rwanda and what he calls “eliminationist assaults” (including genocide) in general, as a form of politics and public policy, with their rationales, leaders, actors, methods and supportive bystanders. He calculates that such eliminationist policies led to the slaughter of at least 100 million people during the 20th century.<sup>12</sup> And of course, these extreme crises continue to be very present today, in Sudan, to some extent in Ukraine, and potentially in Gaza.

With time, the anguish of diplomats and politicians over Rwanda did bring about changes in international law to allow intervention in foreign countries on humanitarian grounds. This new doctrine of “liberal interventionism” had some success, as NATO bombing and military intervention in Yugoslavia did protect ethnic Albanians in Kosovo from further Serbian aggression in the late 1990s. But it failed later – disastrously – when the US and UK led the invasion of Iraq in 2003, in part under the fallacious grounds of replacing Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship with democracy, that would then spread in the region. Later still, Western intervention in Libya during the “Arab Spring” of 2011 contributed to the fall of Muammar Gaddafi’s dictatorship... but also stoked civil war,<sup>13</sup> while limited Western intervention in Syria’s civil war, which began in March 2011, likely made things worse, notably by encouraging substantial and brutal military aid to Bashar al-Assad’s regime from Russia.

### *Economic crises in the 1990s*

The 1990s also had their share of substantial economic crises. One of the most consequential – looked at from today’s perspective – was perhaps the economic chaos in Russia that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and central planning. Whereas Eastern Europe received economic support from the West, little was done to help Russia with its transition. The complete disruption of the economy as it shifted to market forces at breakneck speed – often described as necessary “shock therapy” (see below) – led to the massive expropriation of national assets by a new oligarchy and widespread impoverishment of large parts of the population.<sup>14</sup> Within a few short years, the world’s second superpower had shrunk in size and shrivelled economically (GDP fell by more than 40 per cent between 1989 and 1996), while its currency was destroyed by hyperinflation.<sup>15</sup> Again, in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, Russia (and other emerging countries) experienced a further financial and economic shock in 1998, setting the scene for the emergence of Vladimir Putin from 1999 onwards,... and ultimately for his revanchist drive to make Russia great again by reconquering Ukraine. As for the Asian Financial Crisis itself (analysed in Section 2), it massively impacted several booming Asian countries, with significant social consequences.

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, *Worse than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*, London, Little, Brown, 2010 (US, Perseus, 2009). For an overview this work by Goldhagen himself, see “[Rethinking and Ending Genocide](#)”, Op-Eds, *The Harvard Crimson*, May 26, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> *The Economist* op cit.

<sup>14</sup> Greg Rosalsky, “[How ‘shock therapy’ created Russian oligarchs and paved the path for Putin](#)”, Newsletter, *Planet Money*, NPR, March 22, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> UNCTAD, [The Russian Crisis](#), Geneva, October 1998.

*From the rise of neoliberalism to today's national populism and the end of the international liberal order*

This short overview of some previous, major crises is of course not complete. Other tragedies and hardships across the globe have been overlooked. But here we now want to touch on the structural changes of the global economy which began in the last decades of the 20th century, with repercussions that continue today. Thus, while the West had indeed experienced a “Great Peace” within its borders, its economies and societies were progressively transformed from the mid-1970s onwards as the stable economic edifice constructed after World War II fell apart in the previous decade. This is not the place to review the shift to neoliberalism and globalisation extensively.<sup>16</sup> However, the post-World War II compromise between labour and capital, entailing low unemployment, rising wages (and a high social wage), along with the mass production of standardised consumer products entered into a structural crisis. As the traditional power structures (of capital, patriarchy and race) were challenged, and as high employment gave power to labour, wages rose and inflation began to accelerate. Along with other factors (like spending on the Vietnam and Cold Wars along with the outflow of dollars from the US this entailed), the rise in inflation eventually led to the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, as the US dollar came off the gold standard and the fixed exchange rate system of the post-war world collapsed. When oil prices rose in the wake of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the Arab oil embargo, the West entered a period of “stagflation” with further rising prices and rising unemployment. Progressively policy-makers searched for new instruments to fight inflation and restore profits and capital. Following the key elections of Margaret Thatcher (1979) and Ronald Reagan (1980), a wave of neoliberal reforms was put into place over time in much of the West – and elsewhere – including tax cuts, market deregulation, privatisation and the deliberate weakening of unions. Power shifted back decisively into the hands of capital, leading to surging inequalities in income and wealth in many Western countries (especially the US and UK) and across the globe: indeed as Minouche Shafik, for example, has pointed out, neoliberal cuts in top-income tax rates became a global agenda.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the state’s role shifted away from developing public services to becoming “activist in creating a good business climate and to behave as a competitive entity in global politics”.<sup>18</sup>

This structural crisis of (Western) capitalism in the 1970s led to the emergence of the French Regulationist school of economics, a heterodox, institutionalist approach, drawing on Keynes and Marx.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the postulate of inherent equilibrium found in neoclassical economics, this school specifically places crises and disequilibria at the centre of its thinking, with Michel Aglietta in particular analysing the collapse of post-war “Fordism” in the United States in the 1970s, and Robert Boyer (and others) identifying the emerging characteristics of “post-Fordism” thereafter and more lately the political economy of capitalisms.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For an overview of the emergence of neoliberalism see: David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007 (New York, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Minouche Shafik, *What We Owe Each Other: A New Social Contract*, London, Vintage, 2021, p 173.

<sup>18</sup> Harvey, op cit. p 79.

<sup>19</sup> For a recent summary of the Regulationist approach, see Prashant Rayaprolu, “A régulationist primer”, chapter 1, in Brandon Hillier, Rachel Phillips and Jamie Peck (eds), *Regulation theory, space, and uneven development: conversations and challenges*, Vancouver, 1984press, pp 1-16.

<sup>20</sup> See Michel Aglietta, *Régulation et crises du capitalisme*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1997 (originally published by Calmann-Lévy, 1976 and published in translation as *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*:

The global, liberal economic and financial system which followed the progressive implementation of neoliberalism helped spread capitalism across the world, not only in the wake of the Third World Debt Crisis and the transition of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe mentioned above, but also as other countries, like India, began liberalising their economies in the 1990s. In the meantime, China launched its reforms from the late 1970s onwards, creating a form of capitalism with “Chinese characteristics” – and ushering in the greatest economic transformation in history. Thus, by the end of 2010s, capitalism was “Alone” in the words of Branko Milanovic, although very significantly economic liberalisation has *not* automatically paved the way to political liberalisation: “political capitalism”, controlled by a strong state, most notably in China, stands in clear contrast to the “liberal meritocratic capitalism” of the West.<sup>21</sup>

Milanovic (along with others) also pinpoints the “atomisation” of contemporary capitalist societies, with commodification and “hyper-commercialised capitalism” penetrating households as homes are hired out and domestic tasks are bought in.<sup>22</sup> This marketisation of household work, which still falls more on women’s shoulders, has not, however, benefited all women. Catherine Rotteberg, among others, argues that “neoliberal feminism divides women into aspirational and non-aspirational cohorts, with different roles and expectations for the two groups”.<sup>23</sup> These divergent paths may lead to violent inequalities as “domestic and care workers” are mostly “women of colour and immigrants... often work[ing] without any job security or social benefits, earning poverty wages”.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, in the words of Mark Carney, former governor of the Banks of Canada and England, “we have moved from a market economy to a market society, and this is now undermining our basic social contract of relative equality of outcomes, equality of opportunity and fairness across generations”.<sup>25</sup> Mixing Marx and Oscar Wilde, Carney argues that as capitalism has assigned a price to everything, it has lost sight of *Value(s)*, at “incalculable costs to our society, to future generations and to our planet”.<sup>26</sup> For her part, Nancy Fraser is even more trenchant. In *Cannibal Capitalism*, she argues that the historical basis of capitalism is not just “exploitation” in the Marxist sense (the “front story”, whereby workers are paid less than the value they produce). Instead, capitalism has always also been based on outright “expropriation” (the “back story”). While Marx viewed such “primitive accumulation as a historical precondition for capital accumulation”, Nancy Fraser argues that expropriation, “the forcible seizure... of the wealth of subjugated and minoritised peoples” is an ongoing, “constitutive and structurally entrenched” “fault line” of capitalism,<sup>27</sup> which is based on racial

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*The US Experience*, Verso, 2001); Robert Boyer and Jean-Pierre Durand, *L'Après-fordisme*, Paris, Syros, 1995; and Robert Boyer, *Economie politique des capitalismes : Théorie de la régulation et crises*, Paris, La Découverte, 2015 (translated as *Political Economy of Capitalisms*, Palgrave MacMillan Singapore, 2022).

<sup>21</sup> Branko Milanovic, *Capitalism, Alone: The Future of the System that Rules the World*, Cambridge Mass., London, Belknap, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, pp 185-95.

<sup>23</sup> Catherine Rottenberg, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p x.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p 16.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Carney, *Value(s): Credit, Covid and How We Focus on What Matters*, London, Williams Collins, 2021, p 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p 11.

<sup>27</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism: How our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet – and What We Can Do About It*, Verso, 2022, p 14-15.

differences.<sup>28</sup> In the past, such peoples included slaves and the local inhabitants of Western colonies. In more recent times, the expropriated have been the populations of the “periphery” whose wealth has been confiscated by the “core”. More generally, capitalism is also founded on expropriating the carework provided by women who carry out unpaid “social reproduction”, without which capitalism could not exist.<sup>29</sup> Following Shoshana Zuboff, such expropriation in the form of “rendition” is also a defining characteristic of today’s “surveillance capitalism” through which the users of the internet experience “dispossession” as “human experience is claimed [and appropriated] as a raw material for datafication”.<sup>30</sup>

With the global financial crisis (2007-2008), the Covid pandemic (mainly 2020-2021), and the new wars (Ukraine as of 2022 and Gaza as of 2023) neoliberalism and globalisation have entered a new phase of “polycrisis” in the words of Adam Tooze.<sup>31</sup> These are characterised by several interacting crises and challenges, including what Nouriel Roubini calls “megathreats”, to which we will return in the Discussion below. At this point, two major political changes are worth mentioning briefly. The first concerns the rise of national populism and the threat to democracy it poses in the West (mirroring the shift to authoritarian “strongman” governments across the world). These are complex phenomena further addressed below (in Section 2b and in the Discussion). But the slow income growth of the middle classes and rising inequalities in the West linked to neoliberalism and globalisation are important contributory factors: as Branko Milanovic has pointed out, “lower-income groups of rich countries... are now being overtaken, in terms of their incomes, by people in Asia”, while “globally priced goods and experiences may become increasingly unavailable to middle-class people in the West”. This contrasts with the so-called “Great Compression” of income and wealth inequalities during the heyday of Fordism. This was a time not just of high growth, but also high taxation and expanding welfare states: for example, the top income tax rate in the US was 90% during the 1950s, and was still 70% until Ronald Reagan entered office in January 1981. Following Thomas Piketty’s seminal *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014), this exceptional period of low inequality is now widely seen as the result of the massive socio-economic disruptions brought on by the two World Wars and the Great Depression: indeed, for Walter Scheidel, violence in the form of war, revolution, political collapse and plagues – all major crisis events – has been the *Great Leveller* throughout history, whereas periods of stability are favourable to rising inequalities.<sup>32</sup> That said, Branko Milanovic has also rightly pointed out that the Fordist age of “diminished class conflict” in the West, was at the same time the era of the greatest global inequalities: world income inequality measured by the Gini index peaked at 69.4% in 1988. It then fell to 60.1 in 2018, “a level not seen since the end of the nineteenth century”. This was due largely to the rise of China and more generally of Asia.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, pp 27-52.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp 53-74.

<sup>30</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, London, Profile Books, p 233.

<sup>31</sup> Adam Tooze, “[Chartbook #130 Defining polycrisis – from crisis pictures to the crisis matrix](#)”, *Chartbook*, 24 June 2022.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Belknap Press, 2014 and Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveller: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Branko Milanovic, “[The Great Convergence: Global Equality and Its Discontents](#)”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2023 (Published on June 14, 2023) and “[The three eras of global inequality, 1820-2020, with focus on the past thirty years](#)”, Stone Centre on Socio-Economic Inequality, *Working Paper Series*, No 59, November 2022.

The rise of China also plays a role in the second global change in progress, namely the breakdown of the international liberal, rules-based order, largely created after World War II by the United States. With the end of the Cold War, this order was extended worldwide: for example, China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 and Russia in 2012. But the 21st century has seen it being picked apart from all sides. Without going into detail, key steps include: the illegal war led by the US and UK to topple Saddam Hussein in 2003, and America's open use of torture in its "War on Terror"; the failure of unregulated, free-market finance as an economic ideology in the light of the global financial crisis; China's strategic decision to become an independent actor in global development with its Belt and Road Initiative (since 2013); the Trump administration (2017-2021) which undermined the functioning of the WTO, pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement (on global warming), pulled out of the nuclear deal with Iran, and which began a trade war with China, that the Biden administration (2021-2025) followed up; the failure by the West to do more for the Global South during the Covid pandemic; Russia's full-scale, European land war launched against Ukraine on 24 February 2022; and, last but not least, the West's on-going military support for Israel in its total war in Gaza, following the brutal Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, and its connivance in the annexation of the West Bank.<sup>34</sup> We shall return to these issues in the Discussion below.

## **Section 2: the Case Studies of Crises**

### *A simple methodology*

The methodology of the following literature review of cases is quite simple. The idea is to provide summary information about a selection of different types of crises that have impacted global society in recent decades, and mainly since the start of the 21st century. These have been chosen in part following on from the preceding analysis and in part from discussions among the authors, with each contributor suggesting topics to present. A ChatGPT 4o query was also used to help identify key crises during the 21st century, their socio-economic impact, their main social transformations caused by these crises, and their main gender-specific aspects (see the Annex for the full query output). Here, the Box summarises the main types of crises identified, which ChatGPT 4o broke down into five categories. The list does not include the war in Ukraine nor the war in Gaza.

The following summaries aim to highlight: 1/ the nature of the crises in question; 2/ their broad economic and social consequences; and 3/ the specific impact of these crises on women. A minimum of five "serious" bibliographical sources was used in each case study, drawing on references provided by international institutions, governmental sources and academic journals, supplemented by other sources, often from the quality press. The approach is qualitative, intending to build on the arguments above, to contribute to the subsequent Discussion.

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<sup>34</sup> For a brief overview of these issues (prior to 7th October 2023), see: Gideon Rachman, "[Is there such a thing as a rules-based international order?](#)", podcast of an interview with John Ikenberry for the Rachman Review, *The Financial Times*, 20 April 2023.



### Box: ChatGPT 4o Query, 24 June 2024

**Prompt:** Since the beginning of the 21st century, what are the main crises that have affected the world?

#### Crises and types of crises listed by GPT 4o:

##### **Economic crises:**

1. Dot-Com Bubble (2000-2002)
2. Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008)
3. European Debt Crisis (2010-2014)

##### **Political and Social Crises:**

1. September 11 Attacks (2001)
2. Arab Spring (2010-2012)
3. Syrian Civil War (2011– present)

##### **Environmental Crises**

1. Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004)
2. Hurricane Katrina (2005)
3. Australian Bushfires (2019-2020)

##### **Health Crises:**

1. SARS Outbreak (2002-2003)
2. H1N1 Influenza Pandemic (2009)
3. Ebola Outbreak (2014-2016)
4. Covid-19 Pandemic (2019-present)

##### **Technological and Cyber Crises:**

1. Y2K Bug (2000)
2. Cybersecurity Breaches (e.g. the 2017 Equifax breach, the 2020 Solar Winds attack)

## Section 2a: Time-Limited Crises

### *1/ The Asian Financial Crisis (1997)<sup>35</sup>*

As usual with financial crises, the Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) burst suddenly in 1997. Overall, East Asia had been growing rapidly in the preceding decades, pursuing the export-led growth strategy initiated by Japan after World War II. As a result, the region had been able to cope with the Third World Debt Crisis of the 1980s, and populations were being lifted out of poverty. This strong development was led by a first generation of “newly industrialised economies”, also known as the Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan). They were followed by a new group – the Tiger Cubs – including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand (and later Vietnam). It was this group, along with Korea but excluding Vietnam, that suffered from the AFC, which resulted from structural problems that had built up over time. These included: “large external deficits and inflated property and stock market values; the prolonged maintenance of pegged exchange rates, in some cases at unsustainable levels [...] encouraging external borrowing and leading to excessive exposure to foreign exchange rate risk; a lack of enforcement of prudential rules [...] leading] to a sharp deterioration in the quality of banks’ loan portfolios [...]; problems resulting from the limited availability of data and a lack of transparency [...]; problems of governance, [...] which] fuelled the reluctance of foreign creditors to roll over short-term loans, and led to downward pressures on currencies and stock markets”.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Summary prepared by Nicholas Sowels.

<sup>36</sup> IMF Staff, “[The Asian Crisis: Causes and Cures](#)”, *Finance & Development*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 1998

The AFC exploded in July 1997 when the Thai government was no longer able to peg the baht to the dollar, having run down its foreign exchange reserves. This led to a currency collapse, with the value of the baht halving by January 1998. Similar currency collapses followed in the other countries as foreign investors withdrew capital.<sup>37</sup> These financial shocks in turn triggered recessions of varying severity. In the Philippines, growth “only” fell from 5.2% in 1997 to -0.5% in 1998. But other countries experienced major contractions: Indonesia’s GDP growth slumped from 4.7% in 1997 to -13.1% in 1998; Malaysia’s from 7.3% to -7.4%, and South Korea’s growth fell from 6.2% to -5.1%.<sup>38</sup> These contractions led to surging unemployment and underemployment, while falling currencies pushed up the cost of imports like food and medicines. Indonesia saw food prices rise by 81% in 1998, and a further 25% the following year. In Malaysia and Thailand, food prices rose by 9% and 10% respectively in 1998.<sup>39</sup>

Contagion was a key feature of this crisis, as it had been with the Third World Debt Crisis in the 1980s, and as noted above, the AFC impacted Russia (in 1998), and threatened Latin America.<sup>40</sup> But the international community (including the IMF and the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, as well as governments in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and the United States) mobilised \$118 billion in loans for Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea, albeit with the orthodox conditions of economic reforms.<sup>41</sup> In retrospect, these countries thus came out of the AFC fairly quickly, notably as their trade positions improved strongly in 1998. The overall social consequences were not as bad as initially projected, in part because the IMF became more supportive of social policies to alleviate the crisis.<sup>42</sup> But in the short run, there was bitter hardship, especially as poverty was still widespread, notably in Indonesia. Moreover, parts of Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand were also hit by drought, compounding problems of under- and unemployment, food insecurity and malnutrition. The social fabric of these countries came under strong pressure – in varying ways across countries – as urban residents moved back to the countryside, families had to step in to take care of relatives, children were withdrawn from schools and obliged to work, and slum dwellers in large cities (like Bangkok) turned to illicit activities (like drug dealing and prostitution), etc.<sup>43</sup>

Although no social group was left untouched by the AFC, “women workers bore a disproportionate share of the labour market adjustments triggered by the crisis”: in Korea, employment fell by 3.8% for men but 7.1% for women; in Thailand, one survey indicated that 60% of workers losing jobs were women; and in Indonesia, more than half of working women became underemployed (working 35 hours per week), compared to one-third of all employed

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<sup>37</sup> Federal Reserve History, “[Asian Financial Crisis: July 1997-December 1998](#)”, November 22, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Investopedia Team, reviewed by Jefreda Brown, “[Asian Financial Crisis: Causes, Responses, Lessons Learned](#)”, updated 19 April 2024.

<sup>39</sup> M. Ramesh, “[Economic Crisis and its Social Impacts: Lessons from the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis](#)”, *Global Social Policy*, vol. 9(Supp): pp 79–99.

<sup>40</sup> Tamar Manuelyan Atinc and Michael Walton, “[Social Consequences of the East Asian Financial Crisis](#)”, *World Bank paper 31041*, based on Chapter 5 of *East Asia: the Road to Recovery*, World Bank 1998.

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that Malaysia opted not to seek IMF assistance. At the start of the crisis, its economic position was quite robust, and it chose to pursue its own, unorthodox, stabilisation programme, in particular by placing severe restrictions on currency convertibility: see Shankaran Nambiar, “[Malaysia’s response to the Financial Crisis: Reconsidering the viability of unorthodox policy](#)”, *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 1, June, 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Ramesh, op cit.

<sup>43</sup> Tamar Manuelyan Atinc and Walton, op cit.

men, while there was also a large rise in women working unpaid in family-run businesses.<sup>44</sup> Although drawing more on anecdotal evidence, Manuelyan Atinc and Walton noted that women and girls were more impacted in multiple ways, including facing disproportionate cuts in food intake, and high dropout rates from schooling, while also being subjected to a rise in domestic violence and prostitution.<sup>45</sup>

## *2/ Some gender consequences of the GFC (2007-2009) and European sovereign debt crisis (2010-2014)*<sup>46</sup>

The sovereign debt crisis was a major crisis that shook the eurozone in 2010 and led to mounting fears, through 2011 and 2012, over the viability of the single currency.<sup>47</sup> The crisis first erupted in Greece, whose debt-to-GDP ratio reached 113% in late 2009, but spread quickly to other 'vulnerable' economies, such as Ireland, Italy, Cyprus and Spain.<sup>48</sup> Convinced that the debt problem was mainly due to increased levels of government spending, the *Troika* – the EU Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB), and the IMF – provided generous bailouts to the debt-ridden governments (including Greece, Portugal and Ireland), but also demanded harsh austerity measures designed to implement major cuts in public expenditure, leading to significant retrenchments of welfare states.<sup>49</sup> It has been argued, however, that this response to financial distress was detrimental to these countries' public finances.<sup>50</sup>

In terms of welfare cuts, Robert Blanton *et al* highlight that while a great deal of research has focused on the macroeconomic consequences of (financial) crises and the adverse effects of austerity on the well-being of European societies, the gender-specific impacts have remained empirically understudied.<sup>51</sup> This scarcity of gender-desegregated evidence is linked to what Francesca Bettio *et al* note was the "gender blindness" in public budget cuts,<sup>52</sup> whereby none of the fiscal consolidation measures were gender-mainstreamed, particularly in countries where austerity had significant consequences on women – such as Estonia,<sup>53</sup> Ireland and Latvia.

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<sup>44</sup> USAID Office of Women in Development, GenderReach Project, "[WORKING WITHOUT A NET: Women and the Asian Financial Crisis](#)", *Gender Matters Quarterly*, Issue No. 2, January 2000.

<sup>45</sup> Tamar Manuelyan Atinc and Michael Walton, op cit.

<sup>46</sup> Summary prepared by Youssef Sharaf.

<sup>47</sup> Philip R Lane, "[The European Sovereign Debt Crisis](#)", *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26, no. 3, 1 August 2012, p 49-68.

<sup>48</sup> G. M. Wali Ullah and Samuel Parvez Ahmed, "[A Review of European Sovereign Debt Crisis: Causes and Consequences](#)", *International Journal of Business and Economics Research* 3, no.2, 1 January 2014, p 66.

<sup>49</sup> Howard Karger, "[The Bitter Pill: Austerity, Debt, and the Attack on Europe's Welfare States](#)", *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 41, no. 2, January 1, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Anna Wildowicz-Giegiel, "[The Myth of Austerity. Empirical Evidence from the Eurozone Countries](#)", *eFinanse* 15, no. 2, June 1, 2019): 8–19.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Blanton, Shannon Blanton, and Dursun Peksen, "[The Gendered Consequences of Financial Crises: A Cross-National Analysis](#)", *Politics & Gender* 15, no. 4, 24 October 2018, pp 941–70.

<sup>52</sup> Francesca Bettio et al., "[The impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women and men and on gender equality policies](#)", Publications Office of the European Union, 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Anu Laas, "[Comments Paper – Estonia](#)", presented at the Gender Impact Assessment, Austria, 3-4 June 2014, for the European Commission Exchange of good practices on gender equality programme, 2014.

That said, the gendered effects of austerity were observed first and foremost in employment conditions and wage gaps. In the public sector, where women tend to be over-represented, data shows that the loss in full-time positions for women rose more sharply than for men.<sup>54</sup> For instance, between 2008 and 2014-15, while public sector employment rate for women in Greece and Ireland fell by 16.1% and by 7.8% respectively (compared to 15.5% and 3.7% for men), the loss of full-time jobs in the UK central government was more severe for women (22.4%) than men (20.8%). With this in mind, Lionel Fulton found that the public sector pay gap widened considerably between 2007 and 2011, particularly in Hungary and Latvia, where it went from 12.7% and 17.5% respectively to 15.9% and 20.5%.<sup>55</sup>

Rubery suggests, however, that the economic downturn materialised in a sharper and faster decline in wages and employment rates for men, between 2008 and 2012, than for women.<sup>56</sup> Evidence shows that this was partly due to uneven sectoral segregation, where the male workforce was predominant in the (private) sectors most affected by the crisis, such as the manufacturing, construction and certain branches of the financial sector. H el ene P erivier nevertheless asserts, based on a panel of 8 countries (between 2008 and 2014), that this scenario did not apply to all countries, such as the UK and Denmark.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that cuts to social benefits (measured by their share of GDP) accounted for the lion's share of fiscal consolidation measures, and seem to have held back the reduction of gender gaps. In fact, data shows that the 'streamlining' of unemployment benefits and housing benefits hit female-headed households hardest, especially in Germany. Gunnarsson *et al* also argue that women tended to be disproportionately affected by increases in regressive consumption taxes, such as the VAT, whose EU average rose from about 19% in 1995 to 21.5% in 2016.<sup>58</sup>

### 3/ The "Arab Spring" – aspirations and realities for women<sup>59</sup>

In 2002, despite the progress made in economic growth in the MENA region,<sup>60</sup> a UNDP report warned of the consequences of the "lack of freedom", and the "lack of empowerment of women", in Arab countries.<sup>61</sup> A decade later, these concerns were reaffirmed. In late April 2011, against the backdrop of the wave of anti-regime protests that swept across the Arab World in 2010 and 2011, an article in the American monthly *The Nation* described the mass

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<sup>54</sup> European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), "[Cuts in public sector pay and employment: the ongoing impact on women in the public sector](#)", February 2016?

<sup>55</sup> Lionel Fulton, "[Factors behind the gender pay gap](#)", Report for EPSU by the Labour Research Department, November 2013, pp 35-44.

<sup>56</sup> Jill Rubery, "[Austerity and the Future for Gender Equality in Europe](#)", *International Labour Review* 68, no.4, May 26, 2015, pp 715-741.

<sup>57</sup> H el ene P erivier, "[Recession, austerity and gender: A comparison of eight European labour markets](#)," *International Labour Review* 157, no. 1, 1 March 2018, pp 1–37.

<sup>58</sup>  asa Gunnarsson, Margit Schratzenstaller, and Ulrike Spangenberg, "[Gender equality and taxation in the European Union](#)", DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Summary prepared by Youssef Sharaf.

<sup>60</sup> Efstratia Arampatzi et al., "[Unhappy Development: Dissatisfaction With Life on the Eve of the Arab Spring](#)," *Review of Income and Wealth* 64, no. s1, 1 October 1, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "[ARAB HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations](#)", 2002.

demonstrations as the “Arab Spring for Women”.<sup>62</sup> The latter suggests that mainstream media have often “overlooked” the fact that the “Arab Spring” led to women taking on various roles (such as online activism), giving them a new place in the public (and private) sphere, which thus transformed *gender relations* in several countries – such as Tunisia, Egypt,<sup>63</sup> Yemen,<sup>64</sup> and where the protests were most intense, such as in Syria.<sup>65</sup>

However, the aftermath of these historic events was marked by profound setbacks.<sup>66</sup> By delving deeper into the biographies of young women involved, actively or clandestinely, in the uprisings,<sup>67</sup> many policymakers and researchers have concluded that even if the Arab Spring promised to be “emancipatory” for women, its long-term impact on their social and political *empowerment* has not met expectations.<sup>68</sup> Analysts highlight that in terms of formal political participation, women are once again taking a backseat, following the rise of Islamists to power in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt in 2012 and 2013.<sup>69</sup>

In the case of Egypt in particular, whether before or after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government in July 2013, the situation seems more complex.<sup>70</sup> In fact, Egyptian women are particularly vulnerable to violence in public spaces, with a 2013 UN Women study finding that more than 99.3% of Egyptian girls and women reported experiencing sexual harassment.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, Loes Debuysere asserts that while the current military-backed regime (since 2014) has explicitly committed to combating gender-based violence and promoting women to leadership positions, women who denounce this form of what she calls “state feminism” and who link gender justice to broader demands for freedom of expression and association are particularly subject to the “wrath” of the authoritarian regime.<sup>72</sup>

The situation of women is much more worrying in countries where post-uprising trajectories have been the most difficult. In Syria, despite the emphasis on women’s agency to undertake diverse roles since Bashar al-Assad became president in 2000, they continued to suffer social exclusion in work and decision-making. The situation worsened further after 2011, when their representation was considerably lower than that of men in existing opposition bodies outside

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<sup>62</sup> Juan Cole and Shahin Cole, “[An Arab Spring for Women](#)”, *The Nation*, 26 April 2011.

<sup>63</sup> While Arab women did not participate officially in politics in the first half of the 20th century, Egyptian women had already participated actively in protests (since 1919) for independence during the British occupation and in the creation of trade unions and NGOs.

<sup>64</sup> See, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), “[Women and the Arab Spring: Taking Their Place?](#)”, 2012, pp 4-16.

<sup>65</sup> See Gilles Dorronsoro et al., “[Syrie – Anatomie d’une guerre civile](#)”, *CNRS Editions*, 26 January 2022, pp 290-294.

<sup>66</sup> Melanne Verbeke “[Women and the Arab Spring](#)”, U.S. Department of State, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Fotini Christia, “[How Syrian Women Are Fueling the Resistance: And Why Washington Should Support Them](#)”, *Foreign Affairs*, July 2, 2024.

<sup>68</sup> Nabila Ramdani, “[Egyptian women: ‘They were doing better under Mubarak’](#)”, *The Guardian*, 19 October 2022.

<sup>69</sup> Lin Noueihed and Alex Warren, “[The Battle for the Arab Spring : Revolution, Counter-Revolution and the Making of a New Era](#)”, *Yale University Press*, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Muhamad S. Olimat, “[Handbook of Arab Women and Arab Spring, Challenges and Opportunities](#)”, *Routledge International Handbooks*, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Egypt, “[Gender-based violence](#)”, 8 March 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Loes Debuysere, “[What Egypt’s El-Sisi and the EU have in common when it comes to women’s rights](#)”, *CEPS Commentaries*, 30 October 2018.

and within Syria.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, despite playing a decisive role in delivering crucial humanitarian aid during the civil war, women have been systematically subjected to sexual assault, in a conflict where sexual violence is employed as “a weapon of war to intimidate parties to the conflict, destroying identity, dignity and the social fabrics of families and communities”.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, the current power struggle in Sudan – a country that experienced the second wave of the “Arab Spring” (in April 2019) – is having a devastating impact on women and girls. UN agencies stress that the ongoing conflict has reversed progress towards democracy while leaving the country facing a humanitarian catastrophe, where more than 6.7 million people are at risk of violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking.<sup>75</sup> The economic impact of the conflict has also further marginalized women, depriving them of access to medical and maternal care.

#### *4/ The impact of the Covid pandemic on women in the United States*<sup>76</sup>

Writing in the summer of 2024 (as Paris basked in the glow of the Olympic Games), it seems otherworldly that four years ago the planet was gripped by a deadly new virus, leading to widespread shutdowns and a fall in global GDP of 3.1% in 2020.<sup>77</sup> The coronavirus pales into insignificance compared to the plague that wiped out a third of Europe’s population in the Middle Ages – or even the 50 million killed by the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1920.<sup>78</sup> As of 21 July 2024, the World Health Organisation estimates that “just” 7,054,891 persons had died worldwide of Covid, including 1,191,632 in the United States, by far the highest national death toll.<sup>79</sup> And for once, the world pitied the US.<sup>80</sup>

The US health cataclysm had multiple causes, partly reflecting socio-economic inequalities in general, as well as inequalities in health and health care in particular: indicated, for example, by recent falls in life expectancy for men.<sup>81</sup> But the Covid disaster also resulted from the shambolic actions of the Trump administration, with Trump personally making the pandemic a divisive issue in domestic – and international politics. Instead of coordinating efforts across the US’s complex federal and state jurisdictions, on issues like shutdowns, the use of masks and later on vaccines, policies were sucked into America’s culture wars.<sup>82</sup> There is much irony

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<sup>73</sup> Asaad Al-Saleh, “[Failing the Masses: Buthaina Shabaan and the Public Intellectual Crisis](#)”, *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, Vol. 13, No.5, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “[UNHCR warns of humanitarian cost of Syrian conflict, especially on the displaced](#)”, UN News Center, 5 February 2023.

<sup>75</sup> UN Women, “[A year of suffering for Sudanese women and girls](#)”, *News and Stories*, 14 April 2024.

<sup>76</sup> Summary prepared by Nicholas Sowels.

<sup>77</sup> Brian Stacy, “[Rebuilding economies after COVID-19: Will countries recover?](#)”, *World Bank Blogs*, 6 September 2023.

<sup>78</sup> Douglas Jordan et al., “[The Deadliest Flu: The Complete Story of the Discovery and Reconstruction of the 1918 Pandemic Virus](#)”, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention archive, 17 December 2019.

<sup>79</sup> World Health Organisation, “[WHO COVID-19 dashboard: deaths, total cumulative](#)”, retrieved 4 August 2024

<sup>80</sup> Fintan O’Toole, “[Donald Trump has destroyed the country he promised to make great again](#)”, *The Irish Times*, 25 April 2020.

<sup>81</sup> Azeen Ghorayshi, “[An ‘Unsettling’ Drop in Life Expectancy for Men](#)”, *The New York Times*, 13 November 2023.

<sup>82</sup> See for example, Amy Roberson Hayes and Diamond Lee, “[Women, work and families during the COVID-19 pandemic: Examining the effects of COVID policies and looking to the future](#)”, *Journal of Social Issues*, 2022, pp 1-18.

here, as the Trump administration also put together a massive and successful project to help develop and produce vaccines in record time.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, the Trump and Biden administrations provided huge fiscal support for households and the economy more generally. On 27 March 2020, the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act was passed with a budget of \$2 trillion. It included \$790 billion for the extra costs of federal unemployment benefits through to July 2021, equal to 3.7% of GDP. The CARES Act also made immediate direct payments of \$2,400 to households with couples earning less than \$150,000 per year, and \$1,200 to individuals earning less than \$1,200, plus \$500 for each child. A further \$900 billion package was passed by newly-elected Congress and the outgoing Trump administration in December 2020, while the incoming Biden administration's American Rescue Plan of March 2021 injected an additional \$1.9 billion into the economy, bringing the total Covid stimulus to around \$5 trillion, or nearly a quarter of GDP.<sup>84</sup>

Turning to the situation of women, overall, the pandemic increased the existing pressures on women – work-place inequalities, domestic-care inequalities and violence – globally and in the United States. The World Economic Forum for example estimated that Covid increased the time it would take to close its composite “global gender gap” from 99.5 years to 135.6 years. According to Oxfam, women across the world lost \$800 billion in income, and by September 2021, 47 million women were estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty.<sup>85</sup> In the US, Covid was “hard on women because the US economy is hard on women”, as Nicole Bateman and Martha Ross at the Brookings Institution put it: before the pandemic, nearly half of all working women (46% of 28 million) worked in low-wage jobs (compared to 37% for men), with median earnings of only \$10.93 per hour. Then, with Covid, 39% of people living in low-income households reported a job loss in March 2020, and “because of their concentration in low-wage and face-to-face jobs, these layoffs hit women especially hard”. This was notably the case for face-to-face jobs in services (like retail and hospitality): between February and August 2020, mothers of children of 12 or less lost 2.2 million jobs, compared to 870,000 jobs lost among fathers.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, women were especially exposed to Covid, because they held 78% of all hospital jobs, 70% of pharmacy jobs and 51% of grocery jobs. They were also much exposed in formal and informal caregiving jobs – “confronting death and dying patients on a scale unimaginable before the pandemic”.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, these women had to

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<sup>83</sup> Nicholas Sowels, “[Operation Warp Speed as a ‘Moonshot’: Some Public Policy Lessons](#)”, *Angles*, No 12, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Nicholas Sowels, “[The ‘Great Resignation’: the Changing Wage-Nexus in the United States and the United Kingdom after the Covid-19 Pandemic](#)”, communication at the conference “[The History of Regulation Theory and its Contributions to the Analysis of Global Capitalism and its Recent Crises \(Covid-19, Ukraine, etc.\)](#)”, Paris (+ visio), 8-9 September 2022.

<sup>85</sup> The figures here are taken from “[Covid-19 BRIEF: Impact on Women and Girls](#)” by the US Global Leadership Coalition, updated May 2022. The original sources are: World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report](#), March 2021; Oxfam, “[COVID-19 cost women globally over \\$800 billion in lost income in one year](#)”, Press release, 29 April 2021,

<sup>86</sup> Nicole Bateman and Martha Ross, “[Why has COVID-19 been especially harmful for working women?](#)”, articles, *Brookings*, October 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Judith Berg, Nancy Woods, Joan Shaver and Elizabeth Kostas-Polston, “[Covid-19 effects on women’s home work and life, family violence and mental health from the Women’s Health Expert Panel of the American Academy of Nursing](#)”, *Nursing Outlook*, No 70, 2022, pp 570-579.

deal with the pressures of not infecting their families.<sup>88</sup> This compounded the extra unpaid labour performed by women during the pandemic, as they generally shouldered more of the burden of looking after children;... while also being exposed to increased domestic violence.

## Section 2b: Persistent States of Crisis

This section seeks to present a number of what can only be described as “persistent states of crisis”. This may seem somewhat contradictory, as crises are usually limited in time and associated with turning points. Perhaps a way to define these situations, in contrast to “time-limited crises”, is by stressing that they include permanent states of instability (the wars in Congo) or permanent threats (climate change) which persistently undermine the basic social and economic structures for persons – especially women – to access what Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and others refer to as “capabilities”: the real freedoms that people have to achieve their potential “doings” and “beings”.<sup>89</sup>

### *5/ The ongoing wars in Congo and violence against women<sup>90</sup>*

The ongoing wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) began in the mid-1990s in the wake of the genocide in neighbouring Rwanda (mentioned in Section 1), and have led to approximately six million deaths, making them “one of the deadliest conflicts in world history”.<sup>91</sup> The UN also recently estimated that these wars have internally displaced around 7.2 million people within the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).<sup>92</sup> The First Congo War (1996-1997) occurred as Tutsi forces (from Rwanda and inside Congo) pursued Hutus (the perpetrators of the genocide) who had fled to Congo. Over time, these wars became more complex and horrific as the regime changed in Congo and as the conflicts spread. The Second Congo War (1998-2003), also known as the Great War of Africa [sic], involved not just Congo’s neighbours like Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi but forces from other African countries too, and led to between three and five million deaths. Later still, many non-state forces and rebel groups have proliferated, like the March 23 Movement (M23), made up primarily of Tutsis, and even a Ugandan armed group (the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF) with links to the Islamic State (ISIS).<sup>93</sup> As a result, eastern Congo continues to be in a permanent state of conflict, especially as it holds some of the world’s largest reserves of metals and rare earth minerals used in electronics. This has attracted significant Chinese investment and so also makes the region a site of geopolitical competition. Since the beginning of 2024, nearly 358,000 people have been displaced, largely due to armed conflict, and up to 23.4 million people are presently facing food insecurity.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> See Hayes and Lee, op cit.

<sup>89</sup> Robeyns, Ingrid and Morten Fibieger Byskov, "[The Capability Approach](#)", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.)

<sup>90</sup> Summary prepared by Nicholas Sowels.

<sup>91</sup> Raphael Parens, "[Conflict in Eastern Congo: A Spark Away from Regional Conflagration](#)", Foreign Policy Research Institute, 8 September 2022.

<sup>92</sup> Centre for Preventive Action, "[Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)", *Global Conflict Tracker*, updated 20 June 2024.

<sup>93</sup> Shola Lawal, "[A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo](#)", Explainer, News, *Aljazeera*, 21 February 2024.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



The violence against women which has accompanied these wars is hard to fathom in its enormity. It only occasionally figures in Western media, as do the wars themselves. It is impossible to do justice to these tragedies in this short summary, but a few points must be made in thinking about extreme crisis situations. As in the cases of Yugoslavia and Syria mentioned above, a Human Rights Watch report dated 2002 noted that “sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war by most forces involved in the conflict”... and as an instrument of terror: “In some cases, soldiers and combatants raped women and girls... to terrorise communities into accepting their control or to punish them for real or supposed aid to opposing forces”. Rape has also been aggravated by “extraordinary brutality, shooting victims in the vagina or mutilating them with knives or razor blades”. Girls as young as five have been attacked as have women as old as eighty. While the Human Rights Watch report focuses on the military perpetrators of these crimes, it also notes that in the “prevailing climate of impunity and the culture of violence against women and girls”, sexual crimes were carried out by the police and others in positions of authority, as well as by criminals. Moreover, aggressors were often “rewarded by their leadership and by their powerful patrons for their actions”.<sup>95</sup> Writing later in an attempt to quantify sexual violence in Congo, Amber Peterman et al. confirm the prevalence of violence as a “systematic tactic of war to destabilise populations and destroy community and family bonds”. As of 2007, Peterman et al. estimate that of Congo’s 14.75 million women of reproductive age (15 to 49), 433,785 had been raped in the preceding 12 months, 1.8 million had a history of rape, and 3.37 million had suffered from intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV). They also note that there had been rape allegations against UN peacekeepers in the region, with women also resorting to “survival sex” and “transactional sex”.<sup>96</sup> Such “negative survival coping mechanisms” (NSCMs) are still prevalent today, as conflict has once again flared up since late 2023. A short report released by the World Food Programme in March 2024 observes that 50 cases of sexual abuse are recorded daily in refugee camps around Goma; that 49% of women engage in NSCMs and that 37% of girls are forcibly married before 18 years old, “to reduce the number of mouths to feed in the household and to gain income from another household”.<sup>97</sup> (It should be noted that UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in its recommendations on dealing with sex work in humanitarian situations considers the term “negative coping strategy” to be “judgemental” and likely to “reinforce stigma”.<sup>98</sup>)

#### *6/ Climate change and women in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>99</sup>*

Climate change is considered one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, with significant implications for human rights, international security, and socio-economic stability. Despite contributing less than 2% of global carbon emissions (half of which come

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<sup>95</sup> Human Rights Watch, [The War within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo](#), June 2002.

<sup>96</sup> Amber Peterman, Tia Palermo, Caryn Bredenkamp, [“Estimates and Determinants of Sexual Violence Against Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo”](#), *American Journal of Public Health*, 30 August 2011.

<sup>97</sup> World Food Programme, [“Women, girls, and the protection crisis in Eastern DRC”](#), Situation Report – Democratic Republic of Congo, March 2024.

<sup>98</sup> UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), [“Responding to the health and protection needs of people selling or exchanging sex in humanitarian settings: Operational guidance”](#), 2021, p 9.

<sup>99</sup> Summary prepared by Tamar Ly.

from South Africa), Sub-Saharan Africa has become a focal point for understanding the disproportionate effects of climate change on vulnerable populations.<sup>100</sup> The region's heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture, which is highly sensitive to climate variability, makes it particularly vulnerable.<sup>101</sup> Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for approximately 25-35% of the continent's GDP and employs over half of the working population, with 65-70% of the labour force engaged in this sector, the majority of whom live in rural areas. Women play a critical role comprising around 60-80% of small-scale farmers, depending on the locality and are therefore significantly impacted by the intersection of poverty and climate change as will be further explored.<sup>102</sup> Studies indicate that rising temperatures and increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, such as droughts and massive floods, are becoming more frequent. These changes contribute to deforestation, water scarcity, and land degradation,<sup>103</sup> which shorten growing seasons, severely reduce agricultural output, push millions into food insecurity, and exacerbate poverty levels. It is estimated that crop yields in Sub-Saharan Africa could decrease by up to 20% by 2050, with some regions in West Africa already experiencing prolonged droughts and significant declines in yields.<sup>104</sup> In these areas, crop losses are expected to reach up to 50% by 2050.<sup>105</sup> Meanwhile, food demand in Africa is expected to rise significantly, driven by a substantial population increase. According to the UN, Africa's population is projected to double from 1.2 billion in 2022, surpassing 2 billion by 2050.<sup>106</sup> These challenges are nonetheless compounded by high poverty levels, inadequate infrastructure and weak governance structures that undermine the capacity to implement effective adaptation strategies to cope with such a multidimensional crisis.

Botin and Smit's framework provides a valuable lens for understanding how socioeconomic factors and biophysical stressors influence Sub-Saharan Africa's adaptability, particularly in food availability.<sup>107</sup> Filomina's research adds depth to this by exploring how colonial and postcolonial legacies have reshaped environmental and social landscapes, creating new inequalities, especially in the gender division of labour within African agriculture.<sup>108</sup> Gender plays a crucial role in understanding the differentiated impact of climate change, with women often serving as key custodians of natural resources. However, the extent of these vulnerabilities varies across Sub-Saharan Africa. Patriarchal structures amplify women's vulnerabilities by restricting their access to vital resources such as land, credit, and decision-making power.<sup>109</sup> These resources are essential for implementing adaptive strategies like

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<sup>100</sup> Hannah Richie, "[Sub-Saharan Africa emits a tiny fraction of the world's CO<sub>2</sub>](#)", *Energy for Growth*, 17 June 2023.

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Sultan and Marco Gaetani "[Agriculture in West Africa in the Twenty-First Century: Climate Change and Impacts Scenarios, and Potential for Adaptation](#)", *Front. Plant Sci*, 2016, p 2.

<sup>102</sup> World Bank, [Unlocking Africa's Agricultural Potential](#), Africa Region Sustainable Development Series, 2013, p 13.

<sup>103</sup> Serhiy Pirozhkov, Lubov Chuiko, Bohdan Danilishin, Anatoly Dron, Vasil Kremen, Elena Paliy, [Human Development Report 2011: Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All](#), UNDP, 2011.

<sup>104</sup> Liette Connolly-Boutin and Barry Smit, "[Climate Change, Food Security, and Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)", *Regional Environmental Change*, p 387, 2016.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. [World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results](#). United Nations, p 5, 2022.

<sup>107</sup> Liette Connolly-Boutin and Barry Smit op cit., p. 391.

<sup>108</sup> Filomina Chioma Steady "[Women, Climate Change and Liberation in Africa](#)" *Race, Gender & Class: Volume 21*, Number 1-2, 2014, pp 312-333.

<sup>109</sup> Zanele Furusa and Munashe Furusa "[Empowering Women for Gender Equity](#)", Vol. 28, No. 3 (101), *Gender & CLIMATE CHANGE* Taylor & Francis, 2014, pp 65-72, 2014.

cultivating drought-resistant crops or developing irrigation systems.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, women frequently encounter obstacles in obtaining tools, seeds, fertilizers, and dependable water sources, which amplifies their vulnerability to the effects of climate change.<sup>111</sup> Advocates for understanding gender dynamics stress that addressing disparities requires considering specific household contexts and intersecting factors like age, wealth, class, and ethnicity. Djoudi et al. critique the shift in the literature from focusing on female-headed households' vulnerability to a generalized notion of women's vulnerability, arguing that this shift diverts attention from the real issues of inequality in decision-making, resource access, and institutional norms that perpetuate women's exclusion.<sup>112</sup> Recent evidence from Tanzania underscores the particular vulnerabilities faced by divorced or widowed women, who are less likely to access better farmlands or irrigate their crops, making them more susceptible to climate change-related impacts.<sup>113</sup> This underscores the need for resilient infrastructure and community empowerment.<sup>114</sup> Ngoitiko's 2008 study of Maasai women in Kenya highlights the importance of asset ownership, education, and decision-making power in building resilience.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, gendered power imbalances persist, particularly in regions like Lake Victoria, where climate change, more specifically water acidification, has led to the decline of key fish species.<sup>116</sup> Here, highly gendered labour and power distributions keep control of the fishery largely in the hands of men, even though women's roles in fish trading and processing are heavily impacted. Furthermore, climate change is reducing the availability of safe water, forcing women and girls to walk longer distances, such as in Ethiopia where women can walk up to 8 hours to collect water which limits their time for education and income generation.<sup>117</sup>

Climate change is not only impacting food security and economic stability but also other areas of health and safety, exacerbating issues such as malaria transmission and intensifying resource conflicts. Migration also plays a significant role in how communities respond to climate variability. In Mali, while men are free to leave disaster-prone localities to look for economic opportunities, during such periods, women are left to manage increasingly scarce resources and absorb the impacts of climate variability.<sup>118</sup> Djoudi et al. note that in addition to

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<sup>110</sup> Sam Seller [“Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence”](#) *Global Gender Climate Alliance*, pp 5-21, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Amber Peterman, Julia A. Behrman, Agnes R. Quisumbing, “A review of empirical evidence on gender differences in nonland agricultural inputs, technology, and services in developing countries” *Springer Netherlands: Gender in Agriculture: Closing the Knowledge Gap*, pp 145–186, January 2014.

<sup>112</sup> Houria Djoudi, Bruno Locatelli, Chloe Vaast, Kiran Asher, Maria Brockhaus & Bimbika Basnett Sijapati [“Beyond dichotomies: Gender and intersecting inequalities in climate change studies”](#), *Ambio* 45 (Suppl 3), p 258, November 2016.

<sup>113</sup> Katrien Van Aelst, Nathalie Holvoet, [“Intersections of Gender and Marital Status in Accessing Climate Change Adaptation: Evidence from Rural Tanzania”](#), *World Development*, Volume 79, pp 40-50, 2016.

<sup>114</sup> Zanele Furusa and Munashe Furusa, [“Empowering Women for Gender Equity”](#), Vol. 28, No. 3 (101), *Gender & CLIMATE CHANGE* Taylor & Francis, p. 65-72, 2014.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 67.

<sup>116</sup> M. Njiru, Martin Van der Knaap, Anthony Taabu-Munyaho, Chrisphine Nyamweya, Robert Kayanda, B. E. Marshall, [“Management of Lake Victoria fishery: are we looking for easy solutions?”](#), *Aquat Ecosyst Health Manag* 17(1) pp 70–79, 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Malcom G. Farley, [“How Long Does It Take to Get Water? For Aysha, Eight Hours a Day”](#), *UNICEF USA*, March 2018.

<sup>118</sup> Fidelis Udo, & Maheshvari Naidu, [“Assessing local government's response to black women's vulnerability and adaptation to the impacts of floods in the context of intersectionality: The case of](#)

their existing responsibilities, women must take on activities once reserved for men, further straining their ability to adapt to changing conditions.<sup>119</sup> However, Nityao et. al caution against oversimplifying gender roles, pointing out that although migration for economic opportunities is limited for women due to their roles, men also encounter their own set of challenges.<sup>120</sup> While men in these situations are often depicted as transient, Nityao et al highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics, pointing out that men's migration is not uniform across all regions and that diversification within households stands as a coping strategy.<sup>121</sup>

## 7/ Migration crises: the case of Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>122</sup>

As explored, socioeconomic difficulties and climatic shocks in Sub-Saharan Africa have propelled migration as a coping strategy. Migration in the region is complex, encompassing regional and international movements, as well as temporary, permanent, and forced displacement. The African Migration Report 2022 highlights that a record 13 million people were forcibly displaced within the region that year, primarily due to conflict and climate-induced shocks.<sup>123</sup> The same report indicates that internal migration is more prevalent than external migration in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>124</sup>

While migration discussions often focus on men, it is crucial to recognize the significant impact on women who also migrate on different scales and in different contexts. For example, in Ethiopia, women are more likely to migrate than men,<sup>125</sup> contrasting with the aforementioned patterns observed in Mali. Women's migration experiences differ from men's due to unique motivations and heightened vulnerabilities.<sup>126</sup> Rosetti notes that many women in the Horn of Africa migrate to escape poverty, conflict or oppressive gender-based cultural norms, such as forced marriages, limited access to education, and genital cutting.<sup>127</sup> When seeking clandestine solutions, especially in impoverished conditions, they often rely on brokers or trusted individuals.<sup>128</sup> However, this dependence can lead to even more precarious situations.

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[eThekweni metropolitan municipality, South Africa](#)", *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 34(1) pp. 31–41, June 2023.

<sup>119</sup> Nitya Rao , Elaine T. Lawson, Wapula N. Raditloaneng, Divya Solomon & Margaret N. Angula. "[Gendered vulnerabilities to climate change: insights from the semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia. \*Climate and Development\*](#)", 11(1), pp 14–26, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> Houria Djoudi, Bruno Locatelli, Chloe Vaast, Kiran Asher, Maria Brockhaus & Bimbika Basnett Sijapati "[Beyond dichotomies: Gender and intersecting inequalities in climate change studies](#)", opt.cit. p 248.

<sup>121</sup> Nitya Rao , Elaine T. Lawson, Wapula N. Raditloaneng, Divya Solomon & Margaret N. Angula. "[Gendered vulnerabilities to climate change: insights from the semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia. \*Climate and Development\*](#)", 11(1), pp 14–26, 2017.

<sup>122</sup> Summary prepared by Tamar Ly.

<sup>123</sup> International Organization for Migration, [A REGION ON THE MOVE 2021: EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA](#). IOM, 2022.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Tayah, Marie-José, and Adamnesh Atnafu, [Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Migrant Domestic Workers in Transit: The Case of Ethiopian Women Migrants](#), *International Labor Organization*, p 2, 2016.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Clarissa Rossetti, "[An IOM Perspective on Human Trafficking in Niger. International Organization for Migration](#)" IOM, p 5, 2023.

<sup>128</sup> "[African Women Bear the Brunt of Climate Change: The AU Must Shift Its Focus to the Intersectional Impacts of Climate Change. Gender and Migration](#)", *PSC Insights*, 2023.

The WHO report “Women on the Move: Migration and Health in the WHO African Region” highlights health risks for migrant women, categorizing them as economic migrants, refugees, mixed migrants and trafficked. Each group faces significant challenges due to harsh conditions. Economic migrants often endure poor living conditions and exploitation. Refugees experience environments that worsen their physical and mental health. Mixed migrants, like asylum seekers, face healthcare barriers and overcrowding. Trafficked women are especially vulnerable to severe exploitation, abuse, and gender-based violence.<sup>129</sup>

Human trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa is of significant concern and disproportionately affects women, as highlighted by a study conducted by the IOM's which states that in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, 78% of trafficking victims are women and young girls.<sup>130</sup> The same report states that approximately 60% of the migrant population in the Horn of Africa are refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>131</sup> Research by Rosetti on human trafficking in Niger also underscores the disproportionate impact on women and girls. Niger, with its strategic location bordering several countries, serves as a key transit point along the Central Mediterranean Route.<sup>132</sup> This role became particularly significant during the 2015 European migration crisis, which was largely driven by an unprecedented number of Syrian refugees seeking asylum. While the crisis was primarily centred on Syrians, many people from Sub-Saharan Africa also travelled various routes in hopes of a better future in Europe. Those who were smuggled through Niger often ended up in forced servitude, a practice now widely recognized as modern-day slavery, which has been especially prevalent in Libya.<sup>133</sup> Sumaharo, speaking from his experience as a migrant, notes that “the rope of desperation has replaced their iron chains. Now Africans are sending themselves to Europe and becoming slaves in the process.”<sup>134</sup> In Niger, Women and girls make up 69% of trafficked individuals with an average age of 20, highlighting the issue’s relevance to children’s rights. Many victims are recruited by acquaintances or through deceptive social media posts.<sup>135</sup> While human trafficking affects both men and women, research often indicates that women are especially vulnerable to extreme sexual exploitation. However, the 2019 report “More Than One Million Pains: Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys on the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy” highlights that boys and men are also subjected to sexual violence or forced to witness the abuse women endure, which is traumatic for all involved.<sup>136</sup> In Libyan detention centres, women face severe violence, including rape, while men who resist may suffer brutal punishment. Additionally, many women face even greater dangers, such as death, while attempting to cross the sea on makeshift boats.<sup>137</sup> Some of the main nationalities of women registered upon arrival in Italy and Malta along the Central Mediterranean route are Sub-Saharan African, including those from

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<sup>129</sup> World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa. “[Women on the Move: Migration and Health in the WHO African Region](#)”, p 7, 2018.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Clarissa Rossetti “[An IOM Perspective on Human Trafficking in Niger](#). International Organization for Migration” IOM, p 15, 2023.

<sup>133</sup> Human Rights Watch “[The Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Why People Flee, What the EU Should Do](#).” 19 June 2015.

<sup>134</sup> Aryn Baker “[Inside the Modern Slave Trade Trapping African Migrants](#).” *Time*, 14 March 2019.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. p 37.

<sup>136</sup> Sarah Chynoweth “[More Than One Million Pains: Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys on the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy](#). Women’s Refugee Commission, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> International Organization for Migration. [Women & Girls on the Move: A Snapshot of Available Evidence](#). International Organization for Migration, pp 1-5, 2023.

Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.<sup>138</sup> Drowning is reported to be the leading cause of death among migrant women, with a significant majority (61%) of these deaths occurring on the Western Mediterranean Route in 2022, which was primarily used by African migrants.<sup>139</sup>

#### *8/ Some gender implications of today's populism and information technology*<sup>140</sup>

In the summer of 2024, a wave of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim violence and rioting – mainly by men – erupted across England following the murder of three girls at a Taylor-Swift-themed dance class on 29 July (eight other children and two adults were also seriously injured).<sup>141</sup> By the following day, there had been “at least 27 million impressions [on social media] for posts stating or speculating that the attacker was Muslim, a migrant, refugee or foreigner”.<sup>142</sup> The influencer and self-proclaimed misogynist Andrew Tate<sup>143</sup> posted a video on X (formerly Twitter) stating the murderer was an “undocumented migrant” who had “arrived on a boat”.<sup>144</sup> Actually, the assailant was born in Cardiff to Rwandan refugees and is not Muslim. As riots spread across the country, involving attacks on mosques and Muslim-owned businesses, Elon Musk waded in noting that “civil war is inevitable”, and then supporting the conspiracy theory that “two-tier Keir” Starmer was using the police to treat white far-right “protesters” more harshly than minority groups.<sup>145</sup> By 7 August, the riots had calmed down, partly in response to Prime Minister Starmer making it clear that rioters would face the “full force of the law”, and partly as citizens of all communities came together to demonstrate against the violence.<sup>146</sup> Yet the broader political context in the UK remains complex and tense, as integration and social cohesion among mixed communities remain a challenge.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, immigration had played a key role in the Brexit referendum of 2016, as Leavers voted to “take back control” of Britain’s borders and laws. However, while migration from the EU has fallen strongly, it surged in 2022 and 2023 as Britain welcomed refugees from Ukraine, sought foreign workers (for public services like health) and accepted many international students.<sup>148</sup>

In terms of gender, Brexit does seem to have sharpened violence and abuse of women in the public space – pushing some out of politics. The most extreme was the murder of Labour Member of Parliament Jo Cox, killed a few days before the poll by a white supremacist.<sup>149</sup> This

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid p 4.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Summary prepared by Nicholas Sowels.

<sup>141</sup> Daniel Sandford, Gemma Sherlock and Tom Mullen, “[Teen, 17, accused of Southport murders named](#)”, *BBC News*, 1 August 2024.

<sup>142</sup> The estimate was made by associate professor Marc Owen Jones at Doha’s Hamad bin Khalifa University, as reported by Edna Mohamed, “[Southport stabbing: What led to the spread of disinformation?](#)”, Explainer, News | Crime, *Aljazeera*, 2 August 2024.

<sup>143</sup> BBC, “[Who is Andrew Tate? The self-proclaimed misogynist influencer](#)”, 23 July 2024.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> Jessica Elgot and Rowena Mason, “Elon Musk calls PL ‘two-tier Kier’ over police response to UK riots”, *The Guardian*, 6 August 2024.

<sup>146</sup> Neha Gohil, “[Ice-cream and ‘Nans against Nazis’ uplifting acts in face of far-right riots](#)”, *The Guardian*, 8 August 2024.

<sup>147</sup> Observer, “[The Observer view on the UK riots: political neglect lies behind our fractured communities](#)”, *The Observer*, 11 August 2024.

<sup>148</sup> Stephen Castle, “[Britain’s Anti-Immigrant Riots Pose Critical Test for Starmer](#)”, *The New York Times*, 12 August 2024. See also The Migration Observatory, [Net migration to the UK](#), *Briefings*, 4 June 2024.

<sup>149</sup> Ian Cobain, Nazia Parveen and Matthew Talyor, “[The slow-burning hatred that led Thomas Mair to murder Jo Cox](#)”, *The Guardian*, 23 November 2016.

was followed (less tragically) by a series of high-profile women (and some men) politicians quitting politics in subsequent years due to the surge in (online) abuse and threats associated with Brexit.<sup>150</sup> There is also evidence that older male workers with few educational qualifications in regions of industrial decline voted to Leave the EU, partly as it was associated with a “system” they perceived had “quashed their labour market capabilities through the reconfiguration of the gender and race ‘order’”.<sup>151</sup> More generally, there is increasing evidence that younger men – especially those with lower labour market skills – are becoming more conservative, and supportive of strong leaders like Trump, as they see their prospects in society and their capacity to have and support families limited.<sup>152</sup> This contrasts with young women becoming more progressive.<sup>153</sup>

In France, the snap parliamentary elections announced by President Macron just weeks before the 2024 Olympics also saw substantial gains by the far-right, populist Rassemblement National (RN) and squeezed women’s role in French politics.<sup>154</sup> A radio programme on whether women’s voices become *facultative* in “times of crisis” (as during Covid) pointed to several factors undermining women’s role in politics, including: i) the absence of women in the election TV debates, as demanded by the RN’s lead candidate (Jordan Bardella); ii) the initial programme by a new left-wing alliance (Nouveau Front Populaire), thrown together at great speed in the face of the RN threat, and drafted by men showed little care for women’s needs; iii) the hurdles faced by women politicians in mobilising for the poll because of a lack of time (given that they still shoulder more domestic responsibilities than men), which contributed diminished representation by women in the new Assembly; iv) the “glass cliff” women politicians face in office; and v) the general abuse and cyber-harassment women in the public space.<sup>155</sup>

The analysis of populism, social media and cyber-harassment of women have become vast fields of study, and is beyond this literature review. But some points are worth noting. An excellent overview of the “elective affinity” between social media and populism is given by Paolo Gerbaudo, who states that it “can be appreciated at two levels: opinion-building and movement building, and the role acquired by social media as the people’s voice, and as a way to rally the people”. The background to this interaction is the “deep economic crisis that is affecting large sections of the population” (see Section 1). In an era of neoliberal individualism and atomisation, social media provide a way to attack mainstream media and elites, and launch “trolling attacks”, like the #GameGate incident which led women to be accused of

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<sup>150</sup> Alastair Jamieson, Alasdair Sandford and Chris Harris, “[UK election 2019: Is the ‘toxic’ atmosphere over Brexit pushing more MPs to quit?](#)”, *Euronews*, 3 November 2019.

<sup>151</sup> Ros Talyor, “[Leave-voting men, Brexit and the ‘crisis of masculinity’](#)”, *LSE Blog*, 24 October 2018.

<sup>152</sup> Claire Cain Miller, “[Many Gen Z Men Feel Left Behind. Some See Trump as an Answer](#)”, *TheUpShot, The New York Times*, 24 August 2024.

<sup>153</sup> Carter Sherman, “*Young women are the most progressive group in American history. Young men are checked out*”, *The Guardian*, 7 August 2024.

<sup>154</sup> President Macron pushed France into a high-stakes political gamble on Sunday 9 June 2024 when the results of the European Parliamentary elections came in by announcing elections for the Assembly Nationale.

<sup>155</sup> Astrid de Villaines, “[La parole des femmes est-elle facultative en temps de crise ?](#)”, *France Culture*, 16 July 2024, roundtable discussion with Christine Bard, Mercedes Erra and Anne-Cécile Mailfert. (This programme was brought to my attention by Ania Szczepanska.)

“betraying the videogaming community”.<sup>156</sup> More generally, social media have opened up multiple ways for men to perpetrate cyberviolence against women and girls, with “serious...physical, sexual, psychological, or economic” consequences.<sup>157</sup>

That said, Jan-Werner Müller, the renowned scholar of populism at Princeton, argues that worries about social media, augmented by artificial intelligence, as leading to the doom of democracy should be nuanced. He notes that every media revolution in history has created a “moral panic”: the printing press has been associated with wars of religion, radio with the rise of Hitler and TV with the development of McCarthyism. While social media do allow for direct connection between leaders and their followers, and do create “filter bubbles” and “echo chambers”, such bubbles were created beforehand by talk radio and TV news. The important point here is to buttress countervailing forces, like political parties, to strengthen content moderation and improve media literacy.<sup>158</sup> For Alex Krasodonski of Chatham House writing after the UK riots, there is now, however, a major challenge at hand as “Western democracies are finally confronting a hard truth: the infrastructure on which their countries’ politics and information-sharing takes place is increasingly misaligned with their values”. This is most evident with Musk on X. While other platforms (Facebook, Google or TikTok) strive to be “neutral, apolitical entities”, Musk is personally stoking right-wing populism. Yet during the riots, British policymakers were also using social media to warn about the threats to democracy and “to thank local communities and law enforcement”.<sup>159</sup>

### Section 3: Discussion

Based on this cursory overview of crises, which are pervasive globally, what can we say about “women in times of crisis” and the “work done” by crises, about the distinction between “the extraordinary” and “the everyday”? As already mentioned above, the word “crisis” is usually a moment in time, “a crucial or decisive point or situation, especially a difficult or unstable situation involving an impending change” to quote *The Free Dictionary*.<sup>160</sup> Occasionally such change may be for the better, and the adage “never let a good crisis go to waste” may hold, as when the Obama administration expanded health insurance after the global financial crisis.<sup>161</sup> Jean Monnet is also widely quoted for stating that “Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises”, and there has been some truth in this: when the Covid pandemic broke out, the EU acted reasonably quickly to launch an unprecedented, common fiscal package worth €750 billion (NextGenerationEU), and managed to organise a coordinated rollout of vaccines. On a broader level, the renowned British historian Peter Clarke, drawing on Piketty (see above) and borrowing words from

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<sup>156</sup> Paolo Gerbaudo, “Social Media and Populism: An elective affinity?”, *Media Culture & Society*, 40(5), 2018, pp 745-753: [open access version available at King’s Research portal](#), King’s College London.

<sup>157</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, [Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls: Key Terms and Concepts](#), 2022.

<sup>158</sup> Jan-Werner Müller, “[The Myth of Social Media and Populism](#)”, *Foreign Policy*, 3 January 2024.

<sup>159</sup> Alex Krasodonski, “[The UK riots force Western democracies to confront their reliance on technology giants](#)”, *Expert comment*, Chatham House, 9 August 2024.

<sup>160</sup> *The Free Dictionary* definition of [crisis](#).

<sup>161</sup> This expression is widely attributed to Churchill, though no one seems to know when and under what circumstances he actually used it. It was more specifically used by Rahm Emanuel, President Obama’s first Chief of Staff.



Trotsky, has argued that the international liberal order created by the Americans and the British in the 20th century owed much to *The Locomotive of War: the World Wars* (and the Great Depression) led to the creation of Britain's Welfare State and *Pax Americana* after 1945.<sup>162</sup>

That said, when discussing her writings in May 2024, as the war was unfolding Gaza, Naomi Klein regretfully conceded that *The Shock Doctrine*, published in 2007, was her most “perennially useful” book, because it explains the “gap between an event and our understanding of that event”.<sup>163</sup> She reiterated the key idea of her book, namely how individuals and societies are disoriented in times of trauma and shock. Such disorientation has facilitated the pursuit of the neoliberal agenda, beginning with Pinochet's coup in Chile on 9/11, 1973 and its attendant use of electro-shocks as torture for opponents to the regime and the new economic policy of the Chicago Boys, to Thatcher's crushing of the unions in the 1980s, the “shock therapy” imposed on Eastern Europe and Russia in the 1990s (see above), and the “disaster capitalism” which emerged as private enterprise was given responsibility for managing the US occupation of Iraq from 2003 onwards, and rebuilding New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.<sup>164</sup> Klein notes, “[i]t is not that the market has become immune to instability, at least not exactly. It is that a steady flow of disasters is now so expected that the ever-adaptable market has changed to fit this new status quo – instability is the new stability”.<sup>165</sup> She specifically pin-points the position of Israel as a “Standing Disaster Apartheid State” whose military-security industry benefits from this new phase of capitalism.<sup>166</sup>

Proponents of (neo)liberalism and capitalism could of course argue that this capacity to adapt underlines the success and plasticity of market-driven globalisation. It is in many ways astounding that – superficially at least – “business as usual” was re-established after the global financial crisis and the Covid pandemic. These were worldwide shocks of huge proportions, which saw public authorities take on dramatic powers (during the GFC, for example, the US Fed essentially substituted itself for financial markets, banks in many countries were saved, if not nationalised, and the G20 set out guidelines for substantial re-regulation of finance across the globe): *The System Worked*, in the words of Daniel W. Drezner, an international political scientist.<sup>167</sup> The same could be said about the Covid pandemic: hundreds of millions (if not billions) of people accepted to stay at home – very peacefully on the whole. There followed a strong surge in inflation (for multiple reasons) which appeared largely under control by mid-2024, in striking contrast to the Great Inflation of the 1970s. Meanwhile, in most Western countries at least, unemployment either remained low during the pandemic as governments assumed direct responsibility for paying wages (the general policy in the major European economies) or returned to low levels very quickly (the US experience). International tourism was set to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2024.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Peter Clarke, *The Locomotive of War: Money, Empire, Power and Guilt*, London, Bloomsbury, 2017.

<sup>163</sup> YouTube “[‘Unshocked’: Naomi Klein vs the ‘ideological shackles of Zionism’](#)”, in conversation with Mehdi Hasaon on the Zeteo channel, 2 May 2024.

<sup>164</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, London, Penguin Books, 2007.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid p. 428.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid p. 428-442.

<sup>167</sup> Daniel W. Drezner, *The System Worked: How the World Stopped another Great Depression*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

<sup>168</sup> UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), “[International Tourism to Reach Pre-Pandemic Levels in 2024](#)”, *News*, 19 January 2024, and [UN Tourism Barometer, Latest Tourism Data](#), 21 May 2024.

And yet both these major crises have had longer-term, destabilising effects. While care should be taken about drawing a straight line between the GFC and the rise of national populism, the protection of Wall Street over Main Street,<sup>169</sup> and the public spending austerity pursued by Britain's Conservative-Liberal coalition government (coming to power in 2010)<sup>170</sup> as migration from Eastern Europe was rising, surely played their part in the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Turning to Covid, it too seems to have played a role in fragmenting global society. Instead of bringing the world together in the face of a common threat, Covid has been more associated with antagonism beginning with Donald Trump's charge against the "Chinese virus", the global competition for masks, medical equipment and vaccines in 2020, and so-called "vaccine diplomacy" rivalry between the West, Russia and China. Moreover, the relatively limited support given by the West to vaccination in the Global South fuelled resentment across the globe,<sup>171</sup> and is surely a major policy failure in terms of strengthening international cooperation on issues like climate change. If this was not bad enough in weakening the international system, the endless destruction of Gaza and the very basis of any future Palestinian society there, in the wake of Hamas's horrific attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, seems to have brought the "rules-based order" of the international system to an end.<sup>172</sup> Global fragmentation is being followed by confrontation and undermining the possibilities for cooperation.

What exactly all this means in terms of the "work done" by crises is hard to say, and finding an overarching theory is illusory. Based on the case studies above and the discussion in Section 1, crises can be transformative, as was the crisis of Fordism in the 1970s, while societies may also be quite resilient, as development did bounce back fairly quickly following the Asian Financial Crisis. In other situations, "states of crisis" may just go on and on, as in Congo, for example, to say nothing of the planet-threatening global warming. Initial successes or recoveries may hide longer-term consequences, as we have just argued with the GFC and Covid: and here the global pile up of public and private debt from tackling these crises is one of Roubini's "megathreats" hanging over the West and elsewhere – notably China.<sup>173</sup>

Looking more specifically at the impact of crises on women, the overwhelming impression appears quite sombre. The breakdown of Fordism discussed in Section 1 was in part brought on by a multipronged attack on the existing structures of authority and patriarchy, and this was concomitant with greater freedoms for women, in terms of birth control, abortion, and more diverse participation in labour markets: it was only in 1965, for example, that married women in France obtained the right to work and have their own bank current accounts *without* their

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<sup>169</sup> See for example, Rana Foroohar, *Makers and Takers: How Wall Street Destroyed Main Street*, New York, Crown Business, 2016.

<sup>170</sup> Daniel Chandler and Paul Johnson, "[The coalition and the economy](#)", in Anthony Seldon (ed), *The Coalition Effect, 2010-2015*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

<sup>171</sup> Mark Suzman, "[The roots of the global South's new resentment: how rich countries' selfish pandemic responses stoked distrust](#)", *Foreign Affairs*, 8 September 2023.

<sup>172</sup> Agnès Callamard, "[Gaza and the End of the Rules-Based Order](#)", *Foreign Affairs*, 15 February 2024.

<sup>173</sup> Nouriel Roubini, *Megathreats: Our Ten Biggest Threats, and How to Survive Them*, London, John Murray, 2022, pp 11-29, and see also, for example, Marcello Estevão and Sebastian Essl, "[When the debt crises hit, don't simply blame the pandemic](#)", *World Bank Blogs*, 28 June 2022 and Lilas Demmou et al., "[Insolvency and debt overhang following the COVID-19 outbreak: Assessment of risks and policy responses](#)", OECD Economics Department, *Working Papers* No. 1651, 22 January 2021.

husband's consent, and the right to manage the assets they had before marriage.<sup>174</sup> Yet when we look at the case studies above, the apparent “work done” by crises is not very encouraging. Paraphrasing what was said about Covid and women in the US, crises seem to be “hard on women because [society] is hard on women”: the “extraordinary” is invariably harsher than the “everyday”... when indeed crises are not highly violent or life-threatening. Indeed, if there is a “typology” to be made, it would seem to be the distinction between economic (and perhaps public health threats) and crises entailing armed conflict. When societies break down as war takes hold, all restraints are off, and women are threatened by extreme violence including rape, unspeakable torture and murder. Moreover, “women’s” experiences of crises depend fundamentally on their position in the global economy and global society, and intersectional analysis is essential to having a more precise understanding of the “work done” by crises.

## Conclusion

History was generally clement to the West during the second half of the 20th century, although as we have seen in Section 1, this was an age of peak global inequality, with many other parts of the world experiencing major economic crises, wars and even genocide. The attacks on the United States on 9/11, 2001 marked a brutal beginning for the 21st century for the West, as it became involved in war in Afghanistan, and in the illegal war in Iraq from 2003 onwards. New crises followed, notably the global financial crisis and the Covid pandemic. Moreover, at the time of writing (the summer of 2024), the wars in Ukraine and Gaza are not just horrific, with terrible consequences for women and children, but they are also exceedingly dangerous for Europe and the Middle East as a whole. Furthermore, these wars are fracturing the global community, as an overtly anti-Western, anti-liberal bloc is emerging with Russia, China and Iran, while the West has lost all credibility with the Global South in its support for the increasingly eliminationist policies of the Netanyahu government in Israel, which has completely destroyed the infrastructure of society in Gaza and is stepping up its persecution of Palestinians in the West Bank. This cannot but make dealing collectively with global threats like climate change, other environmental issues or the emergence of artificial intelligence more difficult if not impossible.

The summary analysis of crises here and their impact on women suggests that crises affect women negatively on the whole: the “extraordinary” is generally worse than the “everyday”. At best, crises seem to set back women’s rights and freedoms, leading to greater unpaid work – to greater “expropriation” in the words of Nancy Fraser – and less voice in the public space, at least in the short term. At worse, crises in the form of armed conflict and war are profoundly threatening for women, exposing them to the risk of rape, torture and murder. Only rarely do the consequences of crises seem to favour women, as with the breakdown of Fordism from the late 1960s, which was accompanied and in part driven by greater freedom for women. It is also just possible that the unprecedented “Woman, Life, Freedom” uprising by women in Iran in 2022 and 2023 may yet have a transformative impact on the future of the country and the wider (Muslim) world. This movement has been repressed most brutally by the regime, with women being killed in the street, jailed, raped, tortured, flogged and executed – as indeed have many (young) men who joined women in solidarity, fighting also for their own freedom.

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<sup>174</sup> Sabine Effosse, [“La femme mariée avait le statut de mineure au même titre que les enfants”](https://www.info.gouv.fr/fr/la-femme-mariee-avait-le-statut-de-mineure-au-meme-titre-que-les-enfants), info.gouv.fr. 12 July 2023.

Despite the repression, many (young) women are still defying the legal obligation of the Islamic Republic to cover their hair in public – at great personal risk. Their struggle for freedom goes on and may still succeed over time.

Otherwise, it seems to be more the “everyday” that has brought about profound changes in women’s lives in the West and other parts of the world. Within the space of a few decades, women’s roles in labour markets across the globe have been substantially transformed, as workplace needs require less physical force and more intellectual and social skills. Women’s access to paid labour – a precondition for economic independence – has been fundamentally transformed. Birth control and the spread of legalised abortion – despite some notable setbacks as in Poland and the United States – have opened up new possibilities for women, and have transformed global demographics. The millennial ideologies that women are incapable of looking after themselves, of running companies and countries, being scientists, doctors, lawyers, judges, engineers, or directing films with billion-dollar box office takings have clearly been shown to be false. And, to some extent, men are increasingly aware of their generalised historical, abusive behaviour towards women, as exposed most notably by the #MeToo movement. These are profound social changes in human history which have occurred in a relatively short space of time. Barring the complete breakdown of societies across the world as we know them today, they will not be reversed.

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## **Annex: Some summary ideas generated by ChatGPT 4o on June 24, 2024 (Nicholas Sowels – NS)**

*1/ Prompt NS: Since the beginning of the 21st century, what are the main crises that have affected the world?*

**ChatGPT 4o:** Since the beginning of the 21st century, the world has faced several significant crises across various domains, including economic, political, environmental, and health-related. Here is an overview of the main crises that have affected the world:

### **Economic Crises**

1. **Dot-Com Bubble (2000-2002):** A stock market bubble caused by excessive speculation in internet-based companies, leading to a significant market crash.
2. **Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008):** Triggered by the collapse of the housing market in the United States, this crisis led to a worldwide economic downturn, significant bank failures, and massive government bailouts.
3. **European Debt Crisis (2010-2014):** A period of financial instability in Europe due to high sovereign debt levels, leading to severe austerity measures and bailouts, particularly in countries like Greece, Spain, and Portugal.

### **Political and Social Crises**

1. **September 11 Attacks (2001):** Terrorist attacks in the United States that led to significant geopolitical changes, including the War on Terror, invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and increased global security measures.
2. **Arab Spring (2010-2012):** A series of anti-government protests and uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa, resulting in significant political upheaval and civil wars in countries like Syria and Libya.
3. **Syrian Civil War (2011-present):** An ongoing conflict that has caused immense humanitarian suffering, massive displacement of people, and significant regional instability.

### **Environmental Crises**

1. **Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004):** A massive undersea earthquake triggered a series of devastating tsunamis, causing widespread destruction and loss of life across several countries in Southeast Asia.
2. **Hurricane Katrina (2005):** A powerful hurricane that caused extensive damage and loss of life in the Gulf Coast of the United States, particularly New Orleans.
3. **Australian Bushfires (2019-2020):** A series of intense bushfires that burned millions of acres, destroyed thousands of homes, and caused significant loss of wildlife.

### **Health Crises**

1. **SARS Outbreak (2002-2003):** Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) emerged in Asia and spread to several countries, causing a global health scare.
2. **H1N1 Influenza Pandemic (2009):** A new strain of influenza spread rapidly across the globe, leading to widespread illness and mortality.

3. **Ebola Outbreak (2014-2016):** A severe outbreak of Ebola virus disease in West Africa, resulting in significant loss of life and international efforts to contain the virus.
4. **COVID-19 Pandemic (2019-present):** A novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) led to a global pandemic, causing millions of deaths, widespread illness, economic disruption, and significant changes in daily life worldwide.

## Technological and Cyber Crises

1. **Y2K Bug (2000):** Concerns over potential computer system failures as the date changed from December 31, 1999, to January 1, 2000, leading to widespread efforts to update software and systems.
2. **Cybersecurity Breaches:** Various significant data breaches and cyberattacks, including those on major corporations and government entities (e.g., the 2017 Equifax breach, the 2020 SolarWinds attack).

These crises have had profound impacts on global society, economy, and politics, shaping the course of the 21st century in numerous ways.

*2/ Prompt NS: How could these crises be ranked in terms of their socio-economic impact, from the most important to the least important?*

**ChatGPT 4o:** Ranking these crises in terms of their socio-economic impact involves considering factors such as loss of life, economic cost, long-term societal changes, and geopolitical consequences. Here is a possible ranking, from the most impactful to the least impactful:

1. **COVID-19 Pandemic (2019-present)**
  - **Socio-economic Impact:** Extensive global economic downturn, massive loss of life, disruption of healthcare systems, long-term changes in work, education, and social interactions, significant impact on mental health.
  - **Economic Cost:** Trillions of dollars in economic losses, increased government debt, widespread business closures.
2. **Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008)**
  - **Socio-economic Impact:** Severe worldwide recession, significant increase in unemployment, foreclosure crisis, long-term effects on global financial systems, increased inequality.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated loss of tens of trillions of dollars globally.
3. **Syrian Civil War (2011-present)**
  - **Socio-economic Impact:** Massive human displacement, humanitarian crisis, significant loss of life, destabilization of the region, rise of extremist groups, global refugee crisis.
  - **Economic Cost:** Billions in direct damages, long-term costs due to reconstruction and humanitarian aid.
4. **September 11 Attacks (2001)**
  - **Socio-economic Impact:** Significant loss of life, extensive property damage, led to global War on Terror, increased security measures, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, long-term geopolitical changes.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated direct and indirect costs of over a trillion dollars.
5. **Arab Spring (2010-2012)**

- **Socio-economic Impact:** Political upheaval and regime changes, ongoing conflicts in several countries, impact on global oil prices, rise of extremist groups, economic instability in the region.
  - **Economic Cost:** Billions in economic losses, cost of rebuilding and humanitarian aid.
6. **European Debt Crisis (2010-2014)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Severe austerity measures, high unemployment, social unrest, political instability in Europe, long-term economic stagnation in affected countries.
  - **Economic Cost:** Hundreds of billions in bailouts and economic losses.
7. **Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Enormous loss of life, widespread destruction, long-term economic impact on affected countries, significant international humanitarian response.
  - **Economic Cost:** Tens of billions in damages and recovery costs.
8. **Hurricane Katrina (2005)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Major loss of life, extensive property damage, displacement of populations, long-term economic impact on New Orleans and Gulf Coast.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated at over \$160 billion.
9. **Australian Bushfires (2019-2020)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Significant environmental damage, loss of wildlife, economic losses, health impacts from smoke, increased awareness and policy changes regarding climate change.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated at \$103 billion.
10. **Ebola Outbreak (2014-2016)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Severe health crisis in West Africa, loss of life, disruption of local economies and healthcare systems, international health response.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated at around \$2.2 billion.
11. **H1N1 Influenza Pandemic (2009)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Widespread illness and mortality, strain on healthcare systems, relatively moderate long-term impact compared to other pandemics.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated at around \$45-55 billion.
12. **SARS Outbreak (2002-2003)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Health scare, economic losses in affected regions, changes in public health policies.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated at around \$40 billion.
13. **Dot-Com Bubble (2000-2002)**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Significant market crash, loss of investor wealth, slowdown in tech industry, but relatively short-term impact compared to other crises.
  - **Economic Cost:** Estimated at around \$5 trillion in lost market value.
14. **Cybersecurity Breaches**
- **Socio-economic Impact:** Data breaches and cyberattacks lead to financial losses, increased security measures, and regulatory changes, but generally less impactful compared to other major crises.
  - **Economic Cost:** Varies significantly; major breaches can cost billions in damages and losses.

### 15. Y2K Bug (2000)

- **Socio-economic Impact:** Significant efforts and costs to prevent potential issues, but ultimately minimal direct impact as major problems were largely avoided.
- **Economic Cost:** Estimated at around \$100 billion in preventative measures.

This ranking considers the widespread and long-lasting effects of each crisis on global society and economies. However, the relative impact can vary depending on specific regional perspectives and the aspects considered most critical.

*3/ Prompt NS: What are the main social transformations caused by these crises?*

**ChatGPT 4o:** The main social transformations caused by these crises include shifts in work culture, public health awareness, political attitudes, and social behaviors. Here is an overview of the social transformations resulting from each major crisis:

### COVID-19 Pandemic (2019-present)

1. **Remote Work and Digital Transformation:** Increased adoption of remote work and digital tools, changing the traditional workplace.
2. **Public Health Awareness:** Heightened focus on hygiene, vaccination, and public health infrastructure.
3. **Social Distancing and Behavioral Changes:** Altered social interactions, increased use of masks, and changes in public behavior.
4. **Mental Health Focus:** Greater awareness and dialogue about mental health issues due to isolation and stress.

### Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008)

1. **Economic Inequality and Occupy Movement:** Increased awareness and activism around economic inequality, exemplified by movements like Occupy Wall Street.
2. **Trust in Financial Institutions:** Decreased trust in banks and financial institutions, leading to increased regulation and oversight.
3. **Consumer Behavior:** More cautious consumer spending and increased savings rates.

### Syrian Civil War (2011-present)

1. **Refugee Crisis:** Massive displacement of people, leading to increased refugee populations and debates on immigration policy in host countries.
2. **Humanitarian Awareness:** Greater focus on humanitarian aid and the plight of refugees.
3. **Radicalization and Security Concerns:** Increased focus on security and counter-terrorism due to the rise of extremist groups.

### September 11 Attacks (2001)

1. **Security Measures:** Implementation of stringent security protocols in travel and public spaces.
2. **Geopolitical Attitudes:** Shift in geopolitical strategies, leading to prolonged conflicts in the Middle East.
3. **Cultural and Religious Tensions:** Increased scrutiny and discrimination against Muslim communities.

### **Arab Spring (2010-2012)**

1. **Political Activism:** Rise in political activism and use of social media for organizing protests.
2. **Democratic Aspirations:** Increased demand for democratic governance and political reforms.
3. **Civil Liberties:** Greater emphasis on human rights and civil liberties.

### **European Debt Crisis (2010-2014)**

1. **Austerity Measures and Protests:** Social unrest and protests against austerity measures imposed by governments.
2. **Political Fragmentation:** Rise of populist and anti-EU parties in response to economic hardships.
3. **Economic Migration:** Increased migration within Europe as people moved to more economically stable regions.

### **Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004)**

1. **Global Humanitarian Response:** Enhanced international cooperation in disaster relief and humanitarian aid.
2. **Community Resilience:** Strengthening of community-based disaster preparedness and resilience.

### **Hurricane Katrina (2005)**

1. **Disaster Preparedness:** Increased focus on disaster preparedness and response at local, state, and federal levels.
2. **Social Inequality:** Highlighted and exacerbated existing social and racial inequalities in affected regions.
3. **Urban Redevelopment:** Long-term changes in urban planning and redevelopment in disaster-prone areas.

### **Australian Bushfires (2019-2020)**

1. **Climate Change Awareness:** Heightened awareness and activism around climate change and environmental protection.
2. **Community Solidarity:** Strengthened community bonds and volunteer efforts in response to the crisis.

### **Ebola Outbreak (2014-2016)**

1. **Global Health Systems:** Improvements in global health monitoring and response systems.
2. **Stigma and Education:** Efforts to reduce stigma associated with infectious diseases through public education.

### **H1N1 Influenza Pandemic (2009)**

1. **Pandemic Preparedness:** Enhanced preparedness and response strategies for future pandemics.
2. **Vaccination Programs:** Increased emphasis on vaccination programs and public health campaigns.

### **SARS Outbreak (2002-2003)**

1. **Public Health Infrastructure:** Strengthened public health infrastructure and international cooperation in disease monitoring.
2. **Behavioral Changes:** Changes in public behavior regarding hygiene and travel.

### **Dot-Com Bubble (2000-2002)**

1. **Investor Behavior:** More cautious investor behavior and skepticism towards speculative tech investments.
2. **Tech Industry Regulation:** Increased regulation and oversight of the tech industry.

### **Cybersecurity Breaches**

1. **Data Privacy Awareness:** Greater public awareness and concern about data privacy and security.
2. **Cybersecurity Measures:** Increased investment in cybersecurity measures by businesses and governments.

### **Y2K Bug (2000)**

1. **Tech Preparedness:** Emphasis on preparedness and risk management in technology systems.
2. **Public Awareness:** Increased public awareness of potential vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure.

These transformations have significantly influenced various aspects of society, shaping behaviors, policies, and attitudes in the wake of these crises.



4/ Prompt NS: What have been the main gender-specific aspects of these crises?

**ChatGPT 4o:** The main gender-specific aspects of these crises involve differential impacts on men and women due to pre-existing social, economic, and cultural inequalities. Here's a breakdown of how these crises have uniquely affected genders:

### **COVID-19 Pandemic (2019-present)**

1. **Healthcare Workers:** Women, who make up the majority of healthcare workers globally, faced higher exposure to the virus and increased work stress.
2. **Domestic Violence:** Reports of domestic violence surged due to lockdowns and economic stress.
3. **Care Responsibilities:** Women disproportionately shouldered increased caregiving responsibilities at home, impacting their employment and mental health.
4. **Economic Impact:** Sectors heavily hit by the pandemic, such as hospitality and retail, employ a large number of women, leading to greater job losses among women.

### **Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008)**

1. **Employment:** Men faced higher job losses in sectors like construction and manufacturing, while women in sectors like education and healthcare were less impacted.
2. **Gender Pay Gap:** The crisis exacerbated gender pay gaps as women often took on lower-paying and part-time jobs to manage household needs.
3. **Austerity Measures:** Cuts in public services disproportionately affected women, who rely more on these services and are more likely to be employed in the public sector.

### **Syrian Civil War (2011-present)**

1. **Gender-Based Violence:** Increased reports of sexual violence and exploitation, particularly against women and girls in conflict zones.
2. **Refugee Crisis:** Female refugees faced unique challenges, including access to reproductive healthcare and higher risks of exploitation.
3. **Child Marriage:** Rising poverty and insecurity led to an increase in child marriages as families sought to secure financial stability.

### **September 11 Attacks (2001)**

1. **Military Enlistment:** Post-9/11 military engagements saw increased enlistment, impacting men more as they make up the majority of military personnel.
2. **Islamophobia:** Muslim women faced heightened discrimination and violence, particularly those who wore visible religious attire.

### **Arab Spring (2010-2012)**

1. **Political Participation:** Women played crucial roles in protests but often faced exclusion from political processes post-revolutions.
2. **Gender Rights:** Some regions saw a rollback in women's rights amidst political instability, while others experienced increased advocacy for gender equality.

## **European Debt Crisis (2010-2014)**

1. **Austerity Impact:** Public sector cuts disproportionately affected women, leading to increased unemployment and financial instability.
2. **Social Services:** Reduction in social services placed additional caregiving burdens on women.

## **Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004)**

1. **Mortality Rates:** Higher female mortality rates were reported due to traditional gender roles, such as being less likely to know how to swim or climb trees.
2. **Reconstruction:** Women faced challenges in accessing aid and participating in reconstruction efforts, often being marginalized in decision-making processes.

## **Hurricane Katrina (2005)**

1. **Displacement:** Women, particularly single mothers, faced greater difficulties in displacement and accessing resources.
2. **Violence and Exploitation:** Increased reports of gender-based violence in temporary shelters and during the recovery phase.

## **Australian Bushfires (2019-2020)**

1. **Community Roles:** Women played significant roles in community response and recovery, but often faced limited recognition and support.
2. **Mental Health:** Higher levels of stress and mental health issues among women due to caregiving responsibilities and economic impacts.

## **Ebola Outbreak (2014-2016)**

1. **Healthcare Workers:** Women, as primary caregivers and healthcare workers, faced higher exposure to the virus.
2. **Maternal Health:** Disruption of healthcare services severely impacted maternal and reproductive health services.

## **H1N1 Influenza Pandemic (2009)**

1. **Healthcare Workers:** Similar to COVID-19, women in healthcare roles faced greater exposure and workload.
2. **Caregiving:** Increased caregiving burdens at home affected women's economic and mental well-being.

## **SARS Outbreak (2002-2003)**

1. **Healthcare Workers:** Higher infection rates among female healthcare workers.
2. **Economic Impact:** Women in affected regions faced economic instability due to caregiving responsibilities and job losses.

## **Dot-Com Bubble (2000-2002)**

1. **Job Losses:** Men in tech and related industries faced higher job losses.
2. **Gender Representation:** Highlighted the gender gap in the tech industry and led to increased focus on diversity and inclusion.

## Cybersecurity Breaches

1. **Privacy Violations:** Women, particularly those facing online harassment, were more vulnerable to privacy breaches and exploitation.
2. **Employment:** Gender disparity in cybersecurity roles highlighted the need for increased representation of women in tech fields.

## Y2K Bug (2000)

1. **Tech Workforce:** Exposed the gender gap in the tech industry and led to discussions about increasing women's participation in technology fields.
2. **Preparedness Roles:** Women played key roles in Y2K preparedness efforts but often faced gender biases in recognition and compensation.

These gender-specific aspects underscore the importance of considering gender in crisis response and recovery efforts to ensure equitable support and resources for all affected individuals.

*5/ Prompt: What are the main, shared consequences of these crises on women?*

**ChatGPT 4o:** The main, shared consequences of these crises on women generally revolve around exacerbated inequalities, increased caregiving responsibilities, higher exposure to violence and exploitation, and economic challenges. Here is a summary of the shared consequences:

## Economic Disparities

1. **Job Losses:** Women often face higher rates of unemployment during and after crises, especially in sectors like retail, hospitality, and informal work, where they are overrepresented.
2. **Gender Pay Gap:** Crises often exacerbate the gender pay gap as women take on lower-paying, part-time, or precarious jobs to manage household responsibilities.
3. **Financial Insecurity:** Increased economic hardship due to job losses and reduced incomes, impacting women's financial independence and long-term economic security.

## Increased Caregiving Responsibilities

1. **Childcare and Elderly Care:** Women typically assume more caregiving roles for children and the elderly during crises, affecting their ability to work and their mental and physical health.

2. **Healthcare Burden:** In health crises, women, as primary caregivers, face heightened responsibilities, increasing their stress and workload.

## **Exposure to Violence and Exploitation**

1. **Domestic Violence:** Crises often lead to spikes in domestic violence as economic stress and lockdowns increase tensions at home.
2. **Sexual Violence and Exploitation:** In conflict and displacement scenarios, women are more vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation.
3. **Human Trafficking:** Economic instability and displacement increase the risk of human trafficking for women and girls.

## **Health and Well-being**

1. **Mental Health:** Increased stress and anxiety due to economic insecurity, caregiving burdens, and exposure to violence adversely affect women's mental health.
2. **Reproductive Health:** Crises often disrupt access to reproductive health services, leading to increased maternal mortality, unplanned pregnancies, and inadequate prenatal care.
3. **Healthcare Access:** Women may face challenges in accessing general healthcare, particularly in conflict zones and under economic strain.

## **Political and Social Participation**

1. **Exclusion from Decision-Making:** Women are often underrepresented in crisis decision-making processes, leading to policies that may not fully address their needs and concerns.
2. **Advocacy and Activism:** Despite facing barriers, women often emerge as leaders in community response and recovery efforts, advocating for gender-sensitive policies and support.

## **Education and Skill Development**

1. **Interrupted Education:** Girls are more likely to drop out of school during crises, affecting their long-term educational and economic prospects.
2. **Skill Development:** Crises often limit opportunities for women and girls to develop new skills or access vocational training, further entrenching gender inequalities.

## **Social Inequality and Discrimination**

1. **Reinforced Gender Roles:** Crises can reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting women's opportunities for empowerment and independence.
2. **Stigma and Discrimination:** Women, especially those from marginalized communities, may face increased stigma and discrimination during and after crises.

## **Long-Term Consequences**

1. **Poverty and Marginalization:** The compounded effects of economic hardship, violence, and limited access to services can push women further into poverty and marginalization.
2. **Resilience and Adaptation:** Despite these challenges, many women demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability, leading community recovery efforts and advocating for systemic changes.

Addressing these shared consequences requires targeted policies that consider the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women, promote gender equality, and empower women to participate fully in recovery and rebuilding efforts.

*6/ Prompt NS: What are the main public policies which could be devised to reduce the impact of such crises on women?*

**ChatGPT 4o:** To reduce the impact of crises on women, public policies need to be comprehensive, inclusive, and gender-sensitive. Here are the main public policies that could be devised:

### **Economic Empowerment**

1. **Equal Pay and Employment Opportunities:** Enforce equal pay laws and promote employment opportunities for women in various sectors, particularly in high-growth and resilient industries.
2. **Support for Women-Owned Businesses:** Provide financial assistance, grants, and loans specifically for women entrepreneurs to help them start and sustain businesses.
3. **Social Protection Programs:** Implement social protection programs such as unemployment benefits, child allowances, and pension schemes that support women, especially those in informal sectors.

### **Healthcare Access**

1. **Universal Healthcare:** Ensure access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare, including reproductive and maternal health services.
2. **Mental Health Services:** Expand mental health services and support networks, with a focus on addressing the unique stresses and trauma women face during crises.
3. **Telehealth Services:** Promote telehealth services to provide accessible healthcare, particularly in remote or crisis-affected areas.

### **Education and Skill Development**

1. **Education Continuity Plans:** Develop plans to ensure that girls' education continues during crises, including remote learning options and financial support for families.
2. **Vocational Training and Reskilling:** Offer vocational training and reskilling programs to help women transition into new job sectors and improve their economic resilience.
3. **Scholarships and Grants:** Provide scholarships and grants for women and girls to continue their education and pursue higher education.

## Protection Against Violence

1. **Domestic Violence Legislation:** Strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect women from domestic violence and provide support services such as shelters and hotlines.
2. **Safe Spaces and Reporting Mechanisms:** Establish safe spaces and confidential reporting mechanisms for women to report abuse and seek help.
3. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Run campaigns to raise awareness about gender-based violence and promote community support for survivors.

## Political and Social Participation

1. **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensure women's participation in crisis management and decision-making processes at all levels of government.
2. **Leadership Programs:** Create programs to empower women leaders and encourage their participation in politics and community leadership.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Policies:** Develop and implement policies that explicitly address the needs and rights of women during crises.

## Social Services and Support

1. **Childcare Services:** Provide affordable and accessible childcare services to support working mothers and caregivers.
2. **Elderly Care Support:** Implement support programs for caregivers of the elderly, who are predominantly women, including respite care and financial assistance.
3. **Community Support Networks:** Strengthen community support networks and organizations that provide assistance to women in crisis situations.

## Legal and Institutional Reforms

1. **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Enforce and strengthen anti-discrimination laws to protect women's rights in all spheres of life.
2. **Gender Budgeting:** Adopt gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that government spending addresses the specific needs of women and promotes gender equality.
3. **Data Collection and Monitoring:** Collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data to monitor the impact of crises on women and inform policy decisions.

## Economic Relief and Recovery

1. **Targeted Economic Stimulus:** Design economic stimulus packages that specifically target women-dominated sectors and provide relief to women workers and entrepreneurs.
2. **Housing and Food Security:** Implement housing and food security programs to support women and their families during economic downturns.
3. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Promote policies that support flexible work arrangements, including remote work and flexible hours, to help women balance work and caregiving responsibilities.

## International Cooperation and Aid

1. **Global Health Initiatives:** Support global health initiatives that focus on women's health and well-being, particularly in developing countries.
2. **Humanitarian Aid:** Ensure that humanitarian aid programs include provisions for women's specific needs, such as sanitary products and maternal care.
3. **International Legal Frameworks:** Advocate for international legal frameworks that protect women's rights and promote gender equality globally.

By implementing these policies, governments can help mitigate the disproportionate impact of crises on women and promote a more equitable and resilient society.

*7/ Prompt NS: Provide a list of prominent recent references and bibliographical sources which provide key information about the crises mentioned above.*

**ChatGPT 4o:** Here are some prominent recent references and bibliographical sources providing key information about the major crises of the 21st century:

### **COVID-19 Pandemic**

1. **World Bank** - "The Global Economic Outlook During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Changed World" explores the economic impact and long-term damage caused by the pandemic, including a significant contraction in global GDP in 2020 ([World Bank](#)).
2. **History Factory** - "Navigating a 21st-Century Crisis: COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact" discusses the transformative effects on business, technology, and corporate social responsibility during the pandemic ([History Factory](#)).

### **Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008)**

1. **University of Oxford** - "21st century crises, from the global financial crisis to COVID, demand new economic understanding" delves into the economic models and policies that evolved in response to the financial crisis and subsequent economic challenges ([Oxford University](#)).
2. **Wikipedia** - "List of economic crises" provides a comprehensive timeline and description of the events leading up to and following the global financial crisis ([Wikipedia](#)).

### **Syrian Civil War**

1. **Britannica** - "Syrian Civil War | Facts & Timeline" offers a detailed account of the conflict's origins, major players, and humanitarian impact ([Encyclopedia Britannica](#)).
2. **WHO** - "Syrian crisis - WHO's response in and from Türkiye" outlines the health and humanitarian response to the crisis, focusing on the efforts to support refugees and displaced populations ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)).

### **September 11 Attacks**

1. **History.com** - "21st Century: Terrorism, Recession & COVID-19" provides a comprehensive overview of the September 11 attacks and their far-reaching impacts on U.S. policies and global geopolitics ([The HISTORY Channel](#)).

## **Arab Spring**

1. **Springer** - "Twenty-First-Century Crises and the Social Turn of International Financial Institutions" examines the socio-political impacts of various crises, including the Arab Spring, and the responses of international financial institutions ([SpringerLink](#)).

## **European Debt Crisis**

1. **World Bank** - Provides insights into the economic policies and social protection measures that evolved during and after the European debt crisis ([World Bank](#)).

## **Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004)**

1. **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** - "Governance for Resilience: How Can States Prepare for the Next Crisis?" discusses disaster preparedness and the importance of governance in managing natural disasters .

## **Hurricane Katrina (2005)**

1. **Oxford University Press** - Various articles and publications on disaster management and response highlight the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and its socio-economic impacts ([Oxford University](#)).

## **Australian Bushfires (2019-2020)**

1. **World Bank** - Highlights the broader context of environmental crises, including the Australian bushfires, and their impact on climate policies and community resilience ([World Bank](#)).

## **Ebola Outbreak (2014-2016)**

1. **World Health Organization (WHO)** - Detailed reports on the health emergency responses and the strategies implemented to contain and manage the Ebola outbreak ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)).

## **H1N1 Influenza Pandemic (2009)**

1. **World Health Organization (WHO)** - Provides comprehensive data and analysis on the global response to the H1N1 pandemic and its impact on public health systems ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)).

## **SARS Outbreak (2002-2003)**

1. **WHO and other health agencies** - Detailed assessments of the SARS outbreak and the global health community's response to emerging infectious diseases ([World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)).

## **Dot-Com Bubble (2000-2002)**



1. **Investopedia** - Articles on the dot-com bubble offer insights into the speculative investments in technology companies and the subsequent market crash ([Wikipedia](#)).

### **Cybersecurity Breaches**

1. **Various Sources** - Multiple publications and articles provide case studies and analysis of significant cybersecurity breaches and their impact on data security and privacy ([The HISTORY Channel](#)).

### **Y2K Bug (2000)**

1. **Academic and Technical Journals** - Articles and retrospectives on the Y2K bug discuss the global efforts to mitigate potential computer system failures and the lessons learned ([Wikipedia](#)).

These references collectively provide a broad understanding of the major crises of the 21st century, their socio-economic impacts, and the policy responses they have elicited.