

**UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF MULTINATIONAL MILITARY
INTERVENTIONS ON THE STATUS OF LOCAL WOMEN. A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS
OF AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, AND LIBYA**



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DECLARATION

I Rumbidzayi Mutongerwa declare that this Research Report is my own unaided work except where indicated otherwise by reference. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts (International Relations) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I confirm that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university before.

Signed



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ABSTRACT

The research analyses the impact of multinational military intervention on local women's status in Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011). Women are the study's primary focus because they are disproportionately impacted by violent conflict, which exacerbates already-existing prejudice and gender inequities. Their political, economic, educational, healthcare and security status are analysed. The research examines their status in the two years before the interventions, during the occupation and one year after the withdrawal of troops. The before and after case study method is used in the analysis. This method compares observations made before and after the implementation of an intervention to determine the impact of the intervention. The Gender Development Index, Gender Inequality Index and the Women's Political Empowerment Index are used in the analysis. Gender disparities in human development are measured by the Gender Development Index (GDI) in three main areas: education (mean and projected years of schooling), economic position (estimated earned income), and health (life expectancy). A greater GDI denotes less gender gaps and better overall gender equality. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) gauges gender-based disparities in three important domains: economic activity (labor market participation rates), empowerment (the share of women holding parliamentary seats and women's educational attainment in secondary and higher education), and reproductive health (the maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates). Greater gender disparity in these domains is indicated by a higher GII score. The V-Dem Women's Political Empowerment Index assesses women's political empowerment by examining their involvement and representation in political processes, access to power and resources, and influence over political decisions. It considers issues such as women's suffrage, representation in parliament, and the degree to which women can participate in civil society groups and influence policymaking. The research finds that while some improvements to women's status were made during the occupation period, women's status mainly diminished after withdrawal. The study recommends that in future, intervening states should consider the long-term effects of interventions on women, understand the cultural contexts of target states before intervention, promote transparency and accountability concerning policy initiatives and programs and involve women in the peace and security processes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

Military intervention has been a controversial topic in the international arena. Questions have arisen concerning who has the right to intervene and if military intervention achieves its intended policy objectives (Peksen 2011, 455). Modern interventions mainly target states facing serious political and socio-economic crises and attempt to accomplish objectives including averting humanitarian disasters, ending civil wars, advancing democracy and human rights, and restoring stability (Peksen 2011, 455). Nevertheless, it is essential to note intervening states may use military intervention to advance their interests in target states. Due to the devastating and violent nature of military intervention on target states and its impact on the fates of these states and their inhabitants, various scholars have examined the consequences of intervention from a state centric perspective and its effect on democratization (Peksen 2011, 455). The effects of military intervention often exceed its intended aims. Therefore, it is critical to assess the vulnerabilities experienced by particular demographic groups due to military interventions. Women's status is closely associated with the impact and outcome of military intervention. Hence, it is important to examine the complex consequences that military intervention has on local women's status in target states in both short and long-term periods. The study focuses on women because they are often disproportionately affected by violent conflict, which worsens existing gender disparities and discrimination.

1.2. AIM AND RATIONALE

The research analyses how multinational military interventions impact on the status of local women. Improving the status of women has been cited as one of the justifications for intervening in another state militarily. Thus, examining whether this was fulfilled provides insights into the viability of military interventions to improve women's status. Applying a gender-specific approach to analysing the consequences of military interventions is important given that women often have less access to political and economic resources than men because of structural inequality as well as discriminatory cultural practices (Tickner 2001; Peksen 2011, 456). Due to the gender gap in access to resources, women's rights and status may be more vulnerable to significant socio-economic and political upheavals (Peksen 2011, 456). Military interventions can have a major

impact on the stability of the target state and this in turn affects the status of women in these contexts. Thus, it is vital to determine whether women are helped or harmed by these interventions. Military interventions may maintain already existing insecurities and vulnerabilities (violence, discrimination and economic hardships) or reinforce systems of oppression (by ignoring local contexts, empowering oppressors, creating power vacuums and exacerbating vulnerabilities) or in trying to liberate women, in effect add to their oppression. Thus, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine how the status of women changed in the three case studies before and after the multinational interventions.
2. To assess whether the aim of improving the status of women was achieved.
3. To examine how the withdrawal of multinational forces impacted the status of women in the three case studies.

1.3. THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The main question of this study is:

How do multinational military interventions impact on the status of local women? Improving women's status is sometimes used to lobby support as a motivation for why intervention is necessary. However, it may be used as a guise for intervening states to pursue their interests in the target states (Abugre 2012; Xypolia 2022). The research examines whether the objective of improving women's lives was met. In other words, did the interventions improve the status of local women? To ascertain this the research report examines what women's lives were like before and after the interventions in the three case studies with a focus on the economic, political and social aspects of their lives and compares the outcomes. Furthermore, it examines women's programmes and initiatives implemented to enhance their lives. The research then investigates the conditions they faced post withdrawal. The study contributes to the work done on the impact of military interventions on civilians in target states and provides more insight into these effects by using a gender specific approach. By highlighting the unique ways in which women suffer during and after conflicts and interventions, the research may aid in finding ways to minimize this and contribute to initiatives around improving women's status and empowerment.

1.4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Different international instruments enhance and uphold women's status and rights. Concerning political status, The United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952) is a fundamental international norm setting the standard on women's political rights in areas such as the right to be elected to all publicly elected entities, to hold public office, to perform public functions, as well as the right to vote. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1967) in Article 25 states that all citizens have the right to participate in political and public life free from discrimination based on sex, religion, social origin or race (UN 1967, 12). It involves the right to stand for office, engage in decision-making processes, and vote (UN 1967, 13). The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 by the General Assembly and argues that states are obligated to take measures to end discrimination against women (underrepresentation, unequal access to resources, stereotypes about women's capabilities, violence and harassment) in the political and public spheres by ensuring they have the rights mentioned above concerning political participation (UN Women 2009).

CEDAW also states that women have the right to employment opportunities, free choice of employment and profession, equal pay, social security, protection of health and safety (UN Women 2009). Discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, childcare and marriage is prohibited (UN Women 2009). This is supported by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) which states that everyone has the right to just working conditions, equal pay, a decent salary to support themselves and their family, healthy and safe working conditions, equal opportunities for promotion along with leisure and rest (OHCHR 2024).

Regarding education, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that everyone is entitled to education. The clause applies to everyone regardless of gender or any other factor. It also states that education should be compulsory and free at the elementary and foundational levels (UN 2015, 58). Furthermore, everyone should have access to professional and technical education and higher education should be made equally accessible on merit (UN 2015, 58). CEDAW highlights that women should have equal access to educational opportunities and resources in different types and levels of education including scholarships, furthering education and vocational training and guidance (UN Women 2009). Stereotypes concerning gender roles in

education should also be eliminated (UN Women 2009). Women should also have access to engage in sports and physical education along with information on health inclusive of family planning (UN Women 2009).

The Beijing platform for action (1995) was adopted by 189 countries and aimed to achieve gender equality. It is a comprehensive global policy framework for women's rights (UN 1995). It highlighted the importance of women gaining equal access to healthcare and related services. It also emphasized the implementation of gender sensitive initiatives addressing STDs, HIV/AIDS, reproductive and sexual health issues (UN 1995, 4). The instrument called for the promotion of research and spreading information concerning women's health and increasing resources allocated to women's health (UN 1995, 4). Furthermore, it recognizes women's reproductive rights, the need for access to family planning and maternal healthcare to reduce maternal mortality and enable safe childbirth practices (UN 1995, 4). Likewise, CEDAW emphasizes women's entitlement to equal access to healthcare such as pre- and post-natal care, sexual health and family planning (UN Women 2009).

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993 emphasizes the protection of women from various forms of violence (UNHCR 1994, 3). Violence is defined as acts of gender-based violence whether private or public which may or result in sexual, physical or psychological suffering to women involving threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of freedom (UNHCR 1994, 3). According to this instrument, women should be entitled to access to justice where they have been subjected to violence (UNHCR 1994, 3). The Women, Peace and Security framework states that women should be protected from conflict and violence in conflict and post-conflict situations (UN 2011). Girls and women's rights should be protected and enhanced in situations affected by conflict and their relief needs must be met (UN 2011). Furthermore, their ability to act as relief agents should be supported during and after conflict. Gender equality and women's equal participation with men should also be enhanced in security and peace decision making processes at all levels (UN 2011). According to CEDAW, states should take necessary measures to ensure that the exploitation of women for prostitution and all forms of trafficking are stopped (UN 2011). Thus, this study analyses women's political status through their representation in politics and empowerment. This is shown through the percentage of seats held by women in parliament or legislative bodies (UNDP 2023). States with a larger proportion of women in

parliament are often associated with better gender sensitivity policies and women's empowerment (UNDP 2023). Analysing women's political representation in parliament over specific periods enables examining the progress and challenges in advancing women's political representation. Women's economic status is assessed through their labour force participation and income levels. Labour force participation involves the proportion of women of working age, typically between the ages of 15 to 64, who are employed or actively looking for a job (UNDP 2023). Women's average income levels are compared to men's (UNDP 2023). Women's educational status is examined through levels of access and literacy rates. Women's levels of access to education involve their access to basic and secondary education (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, women's access to healthcare and levels of violence are analysed. Their access to healthcare particularly involves their access to healthcare professionals and medical care as well as maternal care, sexual and reproductive health, while levels of violence refer to rape, domestic violence and honour killings (UNDP2023). Lastly, programmes and initiatives aimed at enhancing women's economic, social and political empowerment are examined.

1.5. METHODOLOGY

The before and after case study method also known as the pretest post-test design is utilized in examining the impact of an intervention. This method compares observations made before and after the implementation of an intervention. Data is collected before the intervention, creating a baseline from which changes can be observed (Torgerson 2008). This can be in the form of indicators and other relevant data. A follow up measurement is made. The follow up data is then compared to the baseline data allowing for the examination of the impact of the intervention (Torgerson 2008). Advantages of this method are that it is simple to design and implement and allows a clear comparison of conditions pre and post intervention (Torgerson 2008). Its disadvantages include results may not be generalizable and variables outside the study may influence the outcome (Torgerson 2008).

The before and after case study method is used to analyse the impact of women's status in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. The research analyses women's status in the two years before the interventions, the period during and one year after the interventions to assess their impact on women's status. The periods were chosen to provide consistency in the research. In Afghanistan, the study focuses on the following years; 1999 and 2000 for the period before intervention, 2006,

2011 and 2016 for the period during occupation and 2022 for the period after withdrawal. In Iraq it focuses on 2001 and 2002 for the period before intervention, 2007 for the period during occupation and 2012 for the period after. Concerning Libya, the years 2009 and 2010 for the period before intervention, 2011 for the period during occupation as the intervention lasted just over 7 months, and 2012 for the period after withdrawal are analysed. Data from different indices are used to assess women's status in the three cases during these periods and these are discussed below.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) assesses gender inequality in accomplishment in three fundamental areas of human development: education, health and control over financial resources (UNDP 2023). Education is measured using two dimensions, female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 years and older and, expected years of schooling for females and males (UNDP 2023). Health is captured by female and male life expectancy at birth and male and female estimated income is used to measure the command over economic resources. The United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP 2023) produces the index as part of its yearly Human Development Reports (UNDP 2023). GDI data is obtained from various sources including national statistics offices, international organizations like UNESCO, WHO, ILO and the World Bank, and research institutions (UNDP 2023). Countries are grouped into five categories according to absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values with 1 being closest to gender parity and 0 being farthest (UNDP 2023). This means that a lower GDI value indicates low gender equality while a higher one indicates high gender equality (UNDP 2023). The research utilizes the GDI because it provides multifaceted and comprehensive comparisons pre and post interventions allowing the uncovering of changes and patterns in gender disparities caused by interventions (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, it provides a standardized method of comparing gender disparities in different countries, which is valuable when studying the cases of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, which have diverse sociopolitical contexts but experienced similar military interventions (UNDP 2023). The GDI's focus on gender disparities makes it a more relevant metric than general development indexes. It also provides reliable and consistent data (UNDP 2023).

Gender inequalities defined as the loss in human development resulting from disparities in achievements between men and women are measured by the Gender Inequality Index (GII) produced by UNDP (UNDP 2023). The three main dimensions of GII are labour market, empowerment and health. Adolescent birth rates and maternal mortality rates are used to measure

health whereas the GDI measures health in terms of male and female life expectancy at birth (UNDP 2023). The population with at least some secondary education and the share of parliament seats held by each gender reflects the level of empowerment (UNDP 2023). Labour force participation rates for men and women are used to measure labour market participation (UNDP 2023). GII values range from 0 to 1 (UNDP 2023). A high GII value indicates high inequality between men and women, a low value indicates low inequality between men and women, and 0 indicates no inequality (UNDP 2023). GII data is also sourced from international organizations like WHO, UNESCO, ILO, the World Bank, demographic and health surveys and national statistics offices (UNDP 2023). The GII is used in the research because it provides a thorough view of gender equality compared to using one indicator. It determines the loss in potential human development, for example, disruptions in education and health which may affect women disproportionately (UNDP 2023). It can also identify short term and long-term patterns in gender inequality thereby highlighting the comprehensive impact of interventions over various time frames (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, like the GDI, it provides cross-country comparisons and is reliable and consistent (UNDP 2023).

The Women's Political Empowerment Index is produced by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) institute. It measures the degree to which women can engage in civil society, have civil liberties, and participate in politics (V-Dem 2023). The civil liberties index captures women's ability to make important decisions concerning critical areas in their everyday lives (V-Dem 2023). It involves indices like freedom from forced labour, property rights, freedom of domestic movement and access to justice (V-Dem 2023). The civil society aspect of the index looks at women's freedom of speech, involvement in civil society organizations, representation among journalists and liberty to freely engage in public debate (V-Dem 2023). The political participation index indicates the women's share of political positions in the legislature and distribution of political power (V-Dem 2023). The Women's Political Empowerment Index has a scale of 0 to 1 with 1 representing highest empowerment, 0 representing the least empowerment and intermediate scores representing medium empowerment (V-Dem 2023). The data for the women's political empowerment index is obtained from about 3500 experts in addition to work done by its V-Dem researchers (V-Dem 2023). This index is used in the research because it aims to capture different aspects of women's political empowerment allowing a broad measurement of political empowerment (V-Dem 2023).

Like the GDI and GII, it too provides cross-national comparability along different time frames (V-Dem 2023)

The above indices measure women's political, economic, educational, healthcare and security status. Thereby establishing the extent to which the human rights standards for women set in the previously mentioned international instruments were achieved. The study examines the indicators of women's status over set periods to analyse changes in their status. It uses these indicators in the periods before, during occupation and after intervention. For this study, according to the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1967) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, women are entitled to political representation and participation. This is measured using the share of seats held by women in parliament (UNDP 2023). Regarding economic status, according to CEDAW and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), women are entitled to work opportunities and equal pay. This is measured using labour force participation rates for women and their average income levels (Gross National Income per capita) compared to men (UNDP 2023). According to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), everyone is entitled to education. Women are also entitled to equal access to educational opportunities and resources in different types and levels of education according to CEDAW. Therefore, their educational status is measured by their expected and average years of schooling and the female population with at least some secondary education (UNDP 2023). Regarding healthcare, The Beijing platform for action (1995) states that women are entitled to equal access to healthcare services. It also highlights the importance of maternal, reproductive and sexual health, which is also emphasized by CEDAW (UN 1995, 4). Women's health status is therefore reflected through maternal mortality rates, adolescent birth rates and life expectancy at birth (UNDP 2023). Concerning women's security, levels of violence refer to rape, domestic violence and honour killings are analysed (UNDP 2023).

1.6. CASE SELECTION

There are different ways of categorizing and selecting cases. As noted earlier, the research focuses on three case studies, namely, Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011). The three cases are analysed because improving the status and lives of women was used as one of the justifications for intervention by the U.S and her allies. In the case of Afghanistan, the war was justified as a

fight for the liberation of Afghan women from the Taliban (Shannon 2018). This was evident in the 2001 speech by Former First Lady Laura Bush where she stated that, “Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror, not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us...the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.” (U.S State Department 2001). This was supported in the State Department’s report (2001) titled *The Taliban’s war against women* which highlighted the decline in women’s rights and livelihoods under the Taliban’s rule. To increase domestic support for the intervention in Afghanistan, gendered rhetoric and politicized portrayals of Afghan women were used.

In the case of Iraq, the protection and promotion of women’s rights was also used by the Bush administration to justify the intervention. An example of this is through the former Secretary of State of Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, who stated that, “We are working to advance the interests of Iraqi women in every area, from human rights to political and economic participation to healthcare and education” (U.S State Department 2003). Similarly, Charlotte Ponticelli, the U.S Department of State Senior Coordinator for International Women’s Issues stated that, “Iraqi women, just like their Afghan counterparts, had been prevented by Saddam Hussein from entering schools and universities” (U.S State Department 2003). One of the moral justifications for the invasion was a new future of female emancipation and education. The Bush administration framed the invasion as a means to women's empowerment and liberation and deployed Condoleezza Rice and Laura Bush to reassure the global community that this was the case (Al-Ali 2006). In the context of Libya, Susan Rice and Hilary Clinton argued that rape was being used as a weapon of war when making the case for intervention. Former U.S Ambassador Susan Rice, in a declaration to the U.N Security Council asserted that Gaddafi was supplying his forces with Viagra to promote mass rape (Reuters 2011). The former U.S Secretary of State Hilary Clinton also stated that, "Gaddafi's security forces and other groups in the region are trying to divide the people by using violence against women and rape as tools for war...." (Reuters 2011). These sentiments were echoed by the ICC's Chief Prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo that there was information that Viagra was distributed to Gaddafi's forces to "enhance the possibility of rape" (Reuters 2011). The intervention was justified under UNSC resolution 1973 which authorized member states to use any means necessary to protect civilians including women from alleged human rights abuses by the Gaddafi regime (UN 2023).

The selected cases are from different geographical locations, which enables a more comprehensive analysis because it reflects on the impact on women in different contexts. Furthermore, the case selection is also based on the timeframe. The cases look at different periods and can, therefore, allow us to understand the immediate as well as long-term effects that the interventions had on women's status in the target states.

1.7. DATA ACQUISITION

Both primary and secondary sources of data are used in the research. However, the focus is mainly on primary sources of data. Primary sources provide direct evidence concerning the events, phenomena or people being studied (Rubin and Babbie 2008). Primary sources of data include various indices used in the analysis of women's economic, political and social status, official documents and reports from human rights organisations and the United Nations, news articles and recordings of speeches by officials involved in the events. Secondary sources describe, interpret, analyse and assess data from primary sources (Rubin and Babbie 2008). These include books, academic articles, reviews and essays.

1.8. DATA ANALYSIS

The study examines women's lives before and after interventions in the three case studies. Different indicators are used to assess positive or negative changes in women's political, economic and social status. The study uses different indices to establish this. Some of the indices used are the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Development Index, the Gender Inequality Index, and the Women's Political Empowerment Index. The research also analyses women's initiatives and programmes implemented in these case studies with a focus on USAID initiatives to examine the positives and negatives about trying to enhance status of women in these contexts. The study then compares the results of the before and after analyses of the three cases to establish the extent of the overall impact as well as help identify trends that military intervention had on women's security. Comparing the different cases provides information on the interventions' short term and long-term effects on women's lives and aids in the identification of delayed effects. Comparison can also impact policy recommendations around promoting and protecting women's rights in areas affected by conflict. It can identify successful and unsuccessful policies and initiatives and as such policy makers can adjust future initiatives accordingly.

1.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research focuses on multinational military interventions framed as having the objective of improving women's status. Therefore, it cannot account for all military interventions and other forms of intervention such as peacekeeping operations, humanitarian aid and assistance, peace building, and reconstruction efforts. The study is also desk based and relies on information from other sources as it would be difficult to obtain the opinions of women who have lived through the experiences. Furthermore, some of the sources used may be subjective in their analysis of military interventions' consequences on women.

1.10. ETHICAL CONCERNS

As mentioned above, the research is desk-based and falls into the no-risk category. No interviews or surveys were conducted. A possible conflict of interest is that I am a woman, and the research involves the impact of military interventions on women. However, I aimed to minimize bias by ensuring the work remained balanced and evidence based. An ethics waiver was applied for and approved by the University of the Witwatersrand ethics committee.

1.11. STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

CHAPTER ONE

The chapter provides the introduction and background of the research. It also details the research aims, objectives, questions and rationale for the study. A discussion on the importance of the research question and the main argument under which the research is based is made. The chapter also provides details about the methodology of the research and the research methods to be used. Furthermore, it discusses the study's analytical framework and explains the data sources used for this research. The limitations of this study and its ethical considerations are discussed in this chapter. The structure of the research report is found in this section.

CHAPTER TWO

The second chapter includes an extensive literature review on military intervention and its consequences for women. It also provides information about its legality, when it is necessary, and who has the right to intervene. The chapter also looks at the possible interests of intervening states in the target states.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter focuses on pre- intervention conditions or status of women regarding the economic, political and social aspects of their lives in the cases of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

CHAPTER FOUR

Chapter four analyses women's status after the intervention. It discusses the outcomes of women's economic, political, and social aspects in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. The chapter also analyses the policies and initiatives for women aimed at improving their status in the three case studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

This is the final chapter of the research report. It summarizes the content of the research study and provides recommendations to the identified problems concerning military intervention and its impact on women's status.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multinational military intervention refers to the coordinated movement of regular troops or forces of several states into the territory or territorial waters of another state, or forceful military action by troops already stationed by these states in another state, in the context of a political issue, crisis or dispute (Pearson & Baumann 1993, 4). The deployment of armed forces from various states to a given region or state, is often aimed at specific objectives which may include ending civil wars, prevention of humanitarian disasters, human rights and democracy promotion, counterterrorism and regime change amongst others (Lounsbery 2011, 227). States have historically employed military intervention to achieve strategic aims, at times in accordance with and at other times in breach of sovereignty norms (Lounsbery 2011, 227).

A substantial amount of academic work has investigated the potential effects of foreign military intervention on the target state due to its destructive and violent nature (Peksen 2011). The size and objectives of a multinational military intervention can impact its outcome on the target state (Herman and Kegley 1996). The effects of some interventions can be brief while others can have broad and long-lasting effects on the target states. There was a shift from examining the impact of interventions based on the objectives of intervening states to focusing on the conditions that interventions produce or leave behind (Lounsbery 2011, 228). Research has been conducted on its impact on the target states' economic, political and social aspects (Pickering & Kisangani 2006; Lounsbery, Pearson & Talentino 2011; Wolak 2014; Rose and Kassab 2019).

The research by Pickering and Kisangani (2006) examines the impact of supportive versus hostile interventions and their economic social and political consequences for developing states. Hostile interventions are those that oppose the target state's government and supportive interventions are those that help the target government (Pickering and Kisangani 2006, 364). They found that in developing democracies, economic growth rates, governing institutions, and physical quality of life were not significantly impacted by large-scale foreign military interventions involving over 1000 intervening troops. This contrasts with authoritarian states in the developing world. Furthermore, they find that hostile interventions can aid with democratization on non-democratic states while rival interventions lay the foundation for long term economic growth (Pickering and Kisangani 2006, 365).

Regan (2002) highlights that military intervention is not a successful or dependable method of conflict management because it prolongs conflict compared to conflicts which do not involve intervention. Like Pickering and Kisangani, Regan (2004) finds that military interventions opposing the target state government use more force, resulting in bloodier civil wars than those that do not. The explanation for these findings is that governments often have more resources than the opposition at least initially (Regan 2004, 138). Interventions supporting the target government are described as the only ones perceived as credible, neutral and non-threatening at the same time.

Compared with unilateral interventions, multilateral interventions are seen as having defined objectives aimed at improving economic and political conditions, allowing them to be perceived more positively (Peksen 2011, 459; Regan 2002, 234). The goals of international operations sometimes include concerns about quality of life and democratization efforts (Regan 2002). The literature on this topic claims that when properly executed, multinational intervention will yield positive results regarding creating better economic and political systems (Lounsbery 2011). Multinational military intervention is assumed to work under the presumption of neutrality because they are usually backed by an IGO or alliance such as NATO which may call for a neutral stance or increased humanitarian efforts to meet its member state preference and organizational principles (Lounsbery 2011, 234). Problems arise when multinational military intervention is just an extension of a major power coalition or partisan group (Lounsbery 2011, 237). This was evident with the coalition of the willing in the case of Iraq. Hence, multinational military intervention can be culturally biased and inadequate for democratization (Lounsbery 2011).

Some of the research focuses on the effect of military interventions on democratization and nation-building (Hermann and Kegley 1998; Peceny 1999; Regan 2000; Von Hippel 2000; Pearson 2006; Pickering and Kisangani 2006; Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006; Gates and Strand 2007; Gleditsch, Christiansen and Hegre 2007; Dennys 2014; Dell and Querubin 2018; Dimant 2022). Some of the literature argues that democratic interveners successfully advance democratic change in the short term, however, the target states end up with unstable political systems. In contrast to this literature, other studies which particularly focus on U.S interventions argue that interventions do not normally lead to democracy. Unfavourable domestic conditions are viewed as working to overwhelm the positive efforts of an intervention conducted by the U.N or the U.S (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006, 638). The intervening states' role and commitment to democratization

are deemphasized. Other reasons used to explain the failure of democratization include the incompatibility between the idea of democracy and its imposition through force by outside powers as well as the military interests of the intervening states. Bueno de Mesquita and Downs (2006) focus on the degree to which military interventions foster democracy and the degree to which this depends on the nature of the intervener. Different factors are said to influence the results of an intervention. These include the objectives of the intervening states, the target state's political environment, and the degree of local support for democratization (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006, 647). They find that the democratic interveners rarely meet the objective of democratizing the target state. In other words, intervention has little effect on promoting democracy and may result in its degradation.

Like Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, Von Hippel (2000) examines the issues surrounding using force as a means of democratization in states that have been affected by conflict. The text highlights the importance of cultural factors, social structures and historical contexts in shaping the outcomes of democratization. Intervening states need to understand the importance of these elements and how they can influence nation-building efforts. Furthermore, Von Hippel (2000) highlights that the participation of locals in developing political structures is essential for successful democratic transitions. It is also important because it brings legitimacy to the process. Nation building also requires a long-term strategy from the intervening states (Von Hippel 2000, 100). Democracy cannot simply be exported through forceful means. Military intervention can also have unintended consequences such as resentment and dependency. Given that nation building is challenging, intervening states need to carefully plan for it and examine the risks and rewards of intervention (Von Hippel 2000, 100).

The relationship between military intervention and regime change has also been examined (Payandeh 2011; Butler 2014). Zoric (1996) views multinational military interventions as the harshest because it involves threatening or employing force to subdue an opponent's will. Herman and Kegley (1996) argue that foreign military intervention is one of the most urgent security threats to states. Multinational military intervention is thus equated to armed aggression and a crime against international peace and security as well as an unjustifiable, legally forbidden action. A criticism of this form of intervention is that it may be used to mask imperialist goals of great

powers. International action is used to avoid criticism from the international arena (Herman and Kegley 1996).

The legitimacy of military intervention is also examined in the literature. Finnemore (2003) highlights that the international community has shared beliefs which influence the use of force within a state and between states. Their perceptions of the rights and obligations that states have to one another can impact how force is used between states (Finnemore 2003, 2). States understand and agree that violations of those common understandings are reasons for military intervention. Furthermore, there are rules concerning who may use force, what weapons they may use, who may be the target, how mediators should be treated, and how communication should be maintained (Finnemore 2003, 2). Intervention in this regard is seen as the most effective way of upholding moral standards but also the costliest (Rashid 2012). States create rules about when intervention is necessary or legitimate (Rashid 2012). These rules are linked to power and interests of the intervening states. Given that, by its nature, military intervention violates the principles of sovereignty and self-determination it causes normative discussions about what is right and good in international life, within and among states (Finnemore 2003, 5). Military interventions are justified in different ways and through multiple objectives.

The law about intervention experienced rapid development after World War 2. The principle of non-intervention which states that a state should not interfere in the affairs of another directly or indirectly, was upheld under traditional international law (Rattan 2019, 1). Furthermore, non-intervention is viewed as a crucial factor in safeguarding states' sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity (Rattan 2019, 1). Articles 2 (4) and 2 (7) of the United Nations Charter (1945) enshrine the principle of non-intervention as a legal norm within international law. Rattan (2019) argues that globalisation's international system of interdependence and cooperation has resulted in the shrinking of the domestic jurisdiction and the expansion of international jurisdiction. Two exceptions of the principle of non-intervention are self-defence and collective action under Chapter VII (Articles 31-59) of the UN Charter if there is a breach of peace, a threat to peace or an act of aggression (Lumsden 2002, 800). A prescribed protocol is provided whereby the UNSC assesses under article 39 of Chapter VII of the Charter whether there has been such a breach of peace, a threat to peace or any act of aggression (Rattan 2019, 4). The UNSC then provides recommendations or determines the appropriate measures to maintain or reestablish

global peace and security (UN Charter 1945). If such measures are insufficient, it may utilize the member states' aerial, sea or land forces to take necessary action to preserve global peace and security (UN Charter 1945). Thus, the UNSC will not immediately resort to using military force in the context of collective interventions. However, it may do so if alternative measures fail to address the problem (UN Charter 1945). Furthermore, under collective intervention, the UNSC can order the use of force by regional organizations such as NATO and coalitions of the willing and give authorization for peacekeeping missions to be funded and carried out by UN member states (Rattan 2019, 5). As previously discussed, the grounds for collective intervention include but are not limited to humanitarian concerns, civil wars and environmental catastrophes.

2.1. MILITARY INTERVENTION AND CONSEQUENCES ON WOMEN

Military intervention can have multifaceted consequences on women's rights, lives, and roles during and after conflict. The following section analyses some of the work done on examining these consequences. The impact that multinational military intervention has on women may depend on the objectives, context, pre-existing gender dynamics in the target states, and intervention outcomes.

2.1.1. Afghanistan

Some of the literature examines the consequences of intervention on women's lives and the coverage of Afghan women in the media before, during and after the intervention (Hunt 2002; Mohanty 2002; Berry 2003; Roshan 2004; Stabile 2005 Ayotte and Husain 2005). Kolhatkar (2002) examines the effects of intervention on Afghan women's rights. The before and after method of comparison is used to analyse this question. The paper investigates whether Afghan women have always been oppressed or if they have experienced freedom and better lives in the past. The research finds that the U. S has had a destructive influence on Afghan women's rights even before the 9/11 attacks due to its backing of misogynist fundamentalist organizations and lack of sympathy for Afghan women (Kolhatkar 2002, 12). Afghan women enjoyed relative freedom and advancements in areas such as employment, education and health under the secular government of Mohammad Khan (Roshan 2004, 271). After the 9/11 attacks the U.S' bombing attacks in pursuit of Osama bin Laden further impacted negatively on women. This was manifested through loss of life, starvation, homelessness and displacement amongst other war traumas (Kolhatkar 2002, 20). Apart from the U.S' bombing, women experienced rape and other forms of physical violence due to the fighting between war lords. Academics have argued that the addition

of more armed forces and weapons to the target states already unstable environment could prove counterproductive and further weaken women's vulnerable position through the militarization of society and an increase in violence (Enloe 2000; Cockburn and Zarkov 2002; Tickner 2002).

Stabile (2005) argues that the emphasis on Afghan women's liberation was nothing more than a cynical ploy. It was a means of having the public buy into war. This highlights the need to question the utilization of women, children and their rights as a means of justifying aggression (Mohanty 2002, 112; Jabbra 2006, 246). Moghissi (1994) argues that women's rights issues have long been utilized ideologically to contain and isolate the enemies of the powerful states. The issue of economic and strategic interests as well as imperialism are argued to be the real reasons for the intervention. According to Enloe (2000), militarism by imperialist nations never improves the lives of women and children. Furthermore, the condition of women and children has never been the subject of a pure or forward-thinking discourse (Enloe 1993, 2000; Cohn and Enloe, 2003).

The media coverage on the issue was not the outcome of a sincere commitment to ending the oppression experienced by Afghan women. According to the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA 2001), outrage concerning the Taliban's treatment of women was ironic given that the United States' foreign policy played a pivotal role in empowering this misogynist and anti-democratic regime. The inaction by the United States and United Nations concerning human rights abuses before the invasion showed their disregard for women's rights (Hunt 2002, 116; Jabbra 2006, 246). The U.S and her allies' response after the attacks was highlighted by Sunera Thobani, a leading activist and feminist academic who stated that, 'the path of the U.S foreign policy is soaked in blood' (Hunt 2002, 116). Furthermore, it was highlighted that the narrative on women's rights was serving other political objectives of concealing the impact the war on terror would have on women. While ignoring or increasing the reasons for women's oppression, interveners have used the suffering of Afghan women as a tool for their political and military objectives (Ghosh 2006).

Afghan women were caught in the crossfire, becoming the targets of animosity toward Afghans and Muslims being driven from their homes, becoming refugees, dealing with malnutrition, limited access to medical care, and starvation, as well as losing their male relatives who, under Taliban law, are their only means of mobility (Hunt 2002, 118). Some women resorted to greatly limiting their participation in everyday life and expression to avoid being targeted by men after the fall of

the Taliban (Berry 2003, 144). Women were subject to punishment under Islamic law and were held in jail for offenses like leaving their husbands or having relationships with people of the opposite sex. Women were exposed to both structural and physical violence after the intervention. They experienced profound insecurity (Human Rights Watch 2003; RAWA 2004). One anti-democratic fundamentalist organization was replaced with another when the Taliban was replaced with the Northern Alliance (Kolhatkar 2002; Roshan 2004, 271). This reinforces the argument that the rights of women are supported when it is in the interests of powerful states and are ignored when it is not. This was a strategic co-optation of women's rights as a weapon in the so-called war on terrorism (Hunt 2002, 119). Brutality is veiled in human rights and morality, with American and Western men taking on the part of the world's protector of women and, by extension, of civilisation (Hunt 2002, 119). The irony of conducting war in the name of women lies in the fact that women will be the main casualties of the war.

The research done by Peksen (2011) stands out as it analyses the impact that different kinds of interventions have on women's status in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unilateral military interventions are viewed as likely to lower women's status due to their promotion of the persistence and development of repressive regimes and political unrest in the target states (Peksen 2011, 455). In interventions led by IGO's are seen as most likely to positively affect women's lives or at least causing no damage to them (Peksen 2011, 455). This is due to IGO led interventions being unlikely to defend or support a political system that is patriarchal and authoritarian (Peksen 2011, 456). The study uses three indicators to examine aspects of women's political and socio-economic status. It is concluded that women's political and economic status diminishes during unilateral U.S interventions, and women's political rights are likely to be impacted on positively through IGO interventions (Peksen 2011, 465). Moreover, unilateral interventions which do not involve the U.S are unlikely to cause a significant change to women's status in the target states. Lastly, it is found that in general, there is no statistically significant impact of military interventions on the social rights of women.

2.1.2. Iraq

Different articles have been written explaining the intervention's consequences, including poorly thought-out policies to inadequate policy implementation (Cole 2005; Hashim 2006; Herring and Rangwala 2006; Phillips 2005). Like the intervention in Afghanistan, the intervention in Iraq was also framed around the idea of liberating women. Ismael (2007) and Khalid (2011) argue that

although Iraqi women experienced human rights violations, they were active participants in public life and were not silent and helpless victims as the rhetoric behind the intervention stated. Al-Ali and Pratt (2016) conduct feminist research on women in Iraq. They highlight gap between the ideological support for women's role in reconstruction and the outcomes for women in Iraq. The study makes use of interviews as its research method. A transnational and intersectional analysis is used to gain understanding about women's experiences after the invasion in Iraq (Al-Ali and Pratt 2016, 11). This is important given that gender must be at the centre of analysing what went wrong in Iraq. Furthermore, it is important to question the viability of military intervention as a means of promoting women's freedom. A gendered approach challenges the traditional state centric focus on security and highlights human rights and well-being. The research also highlights how one state's security concerns can result in another's insecurity. The article argues that the intervention harmed the lives of women. This is echoed by Efrati (2012) who notes that the invasion failed to consolidate women's rights through legal means. Furthermore, women were marginalized because the U.S and her allies looked to the nation's "authentic leaders" to secure a pro-western Iraq. Ismael (2007) argues that after the intervention, sexual violence against women became widespread in Iraq.

The consequences of the intervention on the lives of women in Iraq are also analysed by (Brown and Romano 2006). They argue that women were empowered in some ways but were left vulnerable in others. Thus, there were contradictory outcomes for Iraqi women. It is highlighted that the U.S and her allies promised to improve the lives of Iraqi women (Brown and Romano 2006, 51). Security Council Resolution 1483 aimed at establishing a rule of affording justice and equal rights to all citizens of Iraq without regard to gender, ethnicity or religion (UNSC 1483 2003). The research analyses the impact of the invasion in the different regions of Iraq. Women's rights were examined in the periods prior to and after the invasion. Promoting women's rights was more progressive in the northern region than in the central and southern regions (Brown and Romano 2006, 65). The study highlights that the removal of Saddam from power resulted in the entry of different progressive NGOs and government policies more favourable to women and independent women's organizations. The northern region is argued to have increased women's autonomy, empowerment and integration into public life (Brown and Romano 2006, 65). However, it is noted that the progress made at the time still lagged behind countries in Latin America and the

West. In the Southern and Central regions women's rights diminished after the intervention as they faced continued physical violence and abuse amongst other threats (Campbell and Kelly 2009).

2.1.3. Libya

Some of the literature that analyses the impact of military intervention on women in Libya is written by (Isaac 2012; Hweio 2016; Jurasz 2013; Khalil 2016; Langhi 2016; Knipp 2021). The literature recognizes the role that women played in the Libyan revolution as well the challenges they have faced in the post- Gaddafi era. Kuperman (2013) analyses whether intervention can meet its objectives in terms of protecting civilians. The article conducts a counterfactual analysis to investigate the likely outcome in Libya had the U.S led NATO intervention not been conducted. In contrast to former President Obama's claims about the purpose of the intervention being about protecting civilians, in particular women and children, various academics argue that the main objectives were regime change and gaining access to resources such as oil (Abugre 2012; Fernandes 2013; Murray 2013; Terry 2011; Okpotor 2017; Xypolia 2022; Zambakari 2016). The U.S and its NATO allies decided to support rebels who aimed to topple Gaddafi and chose to forgo the peaceful route (Kuperman 2013, 121). The support for these rebels resulted in the increase of the length of the conflict as well as harm to people. After the intervention violent deaths, torture, lawlessness, abductions and other human rights abuses increased (Zambakari 2016, 55). Many Libyans were displaced internally. Libya also became a haven for militias due to the power vacuum that resulted from Gaddafi's death (Zambakari 2016, 55). Women have faced many challenges regarding security, social norms, and legal frameworks and their representation in the transitional institutions has been very low (Isaac 2012, 68). Women's rights have diminished in the post conflict era. Women are treated as second class citizens, reflected in their lack of basic rights and political participation (Langhi 2016, 4). They have also faced gender-based discrimination as well as sexual and physical violence. According to Knipp (2021), women were sold to brothels or private individuals and guards or other migrants systematically raped them. They face discrimination during the hiring process and in the workplace (Human Rights Watch 2017). Women in Libya have had limited opportunities in terms of economic participation.

Imam (2014) has similar findings to the above analysis. Imam investigates Libya's economic social and political conditions in the pre-Gaddafi era, during his rule and after the U.S-led NATO intervention. The article highlights that the U.S and NATO have played a limited role in restoring

peace to Libya post-intervention (1150). Despite Libya under Gaddafi's reign not being the best of democracies, the conditions in Libya were better during his reign than after the intervention (Imam 2014, 1150). A lack of security is argued to be Libya's biggest challenge. The insecurity manifests itself politically, socially and economically. Terry (2015, 182) argues that the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) mandated action of intervening to protect civilians from human rights violations and mass atrocity crimes failed to address the issue of what would happen in the post intervention period. States may argue that they intervene in the affairs of another to end human suffering, however, they are not obliged to remain and rebuild the state after the intervention (Imam 2014). It is civilians in the target state who bear the consequences of the intervention. Military intervention can therefore make the conditions in the target state worse. This was the case in Libya where civilians and in particular women suffer to this day as their rights have been held hostage.

2.2. THE GAP

From the above, the literature on multinational military intervention has mainly focused on the consequences on target states. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in the research. The research focuses on the short-term effects of military intervention and lacks consideration for the long-term consequences of such interventions. Very little research has been conducted on its impact on marginalized groups and women. Ignoring or undervaluing the gender dimension of conflict and security runs the risk of missing critical insights and opportunities for the advancement of peace. It would overlook an entire dimension of the impact of armed conflict. Women frequently experience a disproportionate impact from war, violations of human rights, violence, and displacement. Furthermore, they can significantly impact peacebuilding, reconciliation, and recovery efforts. As such, comprehending the effects of military intervention on women is an important step towards developing efficient and comprehensive policies and programs that tackle the underlying causes and consequences of conflict. This paper contributes to the research on its impact on women by assessing whether it improves or diminishes the status of local women. This will aid in providing a more comprehensive analysis on the consequences of military interventions.

3. WOMEN'S STATUS BEFORE THE INTERVENTIONS

PATRIARCHY AND RELIGION

The majority religious denomination in Afghanistan is Sunni Muslims and the Taliban are a part of this sect. Religion impacted on women's status in Afghanistan as strict Shari'a law was enforced by the Taliban (Levitt 1998, 113). Women in Taliban controlled areas faced great challenges concerning their status and freedom including lack of access to education, work, political participation, healthcare and freedom of movement (Amnesty International 2004). When the Taliban spoke of establishing a pure Islamic state based on the Quran and strict Islamic law, there were questions over which interpretation would be used and if the cited religious authority was more legitimate than others (Levitt 1998, 113). The Taliban's interpretation was condemned by Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stating that the world doesn't support the actions taken by the Taliban in the name of Islam (Levitt 1998, 113). Iran also adhered to strict interpretations of Islam, but women there were allowed to work, hold seats in parliament and drive. Thus, it can be argued that the Taliban used religion to control the state to gain legitimacy and maintain control (Levitt 1998, 113). The effects of patriarchy could be seen in some men's efforts to keep the status quo against women by disguising arguments under religious arguments (Levitt 1998, 114). This patriarchy was ingrained in society along with a tribal based social structure where only men had rights, equality and full access to the public domain (Moghadam 2002).

Patriarchal standards based on religious beliefs and tribal traditions have shaped women's status in Iraq. Islam is the dominant religion in Iraq and has influenced societal laws and values. The constitution created by the Ba'ath regime in 1970, the Iraqi provisional constitution, remained until its suspension in 2003 (Rassam 2005). It stated that all Iraqi citizens were equal before the law under Article 19 (Rassam 2005). Women's status were improved during Saddam Hussein's rule in areas such as professional opportunities, politics and education. Iraqi courts were also secular, and women enjoyed equal recourse to justice as men (Rassam 2005). Still, due to Iraqi society's patriarchal society and the prevalence of tribal organization women were less likely to use the court system than men (Rassam 2005). Following the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam's regime shifted from Arab Socialism to traditional interpretations of Islam in the region. This included reduced tolerance for female liberty in the public domain (Romano and Brown 2006, 54). Saddam's regime sought

assistance from neighbouring Islamic countries and traditionally minded Muslim men in Iraq to consolidate their power and maintain control of Iraq (Romano and Brown 2006, 54). Saddam openly acknowledged Islam's moral authority and this acceptance resulted in a terrible reduction in women's rights which followed patriarchal interpretation and application of the Quran (Romano and Brown 2006, 54). Thus, in the period before the intervention, religion was used as tool to secure political power by Saddam as well to conserve gender inequality (Romano and Brown 2006, 54).

Libya is a predominantly Muslim country with most Muslims being Sunnis (Sawani 2012, 2). Patriarchy and Religion influenced women's status in Libya. These aspects were interconnected and impacted on Libya's legal frameworks and societal norms (Sawani 2012, 2). Gaddafi attempted to replace Islam with the ideology of the Green Book, however, Islam remained a fundamental value in Libyan society and played an important part in shaping the Libyan social order (Sawani 2012, 3). He adopted different reforms focused on strengthening women's rights and gender equality, however, numerous laws continued to perpetuate patriarchal properties (Kelly 2010, 273). Patriarchy presented itself in various ways in Libya, founded in tribal and traditional structures (Kelly 2010, 273). Men held dominant positions in the public and private spheres while women's roles were often limited to traditional ones. Due to patriarchal ideology women faced obstacles such as legal discrimination, for example through Libya's personal status laws which disadvantaged women concerning areas such as marriage, divorce and inheritance (Kelly 2010, 273). Women also faced obstacles such as limited decision-making power in the private and public sphere and limited agency. Concerning religion, Gaddafi's rule was considered secular despite him having fundamental Islamic beliefs (Salih ikiz 2019, 26). The secular governance in Libya was reflected in women's lifestyle and social roles during this era despite the challenges women faced (Salih ikiz 2019, 26). Efforts were made to promote equal access to education, employment and healthcare across the country (Salih ikiz 2019, 26). It is important to note that religion variedly impacted women's status. Some women gained empowerment through religious practices while others faced obstacles because of conservative interpretations of Islam (Kelly 2010, 273).

3.1. AFGHANISTAN

Afghan women have been the targets of policies intended to advance their status and rights and those intended to limit them at different stages throughout the 20th century (Das 2006, 11). The Taliban's entrance into the Afghan political scene in 1994/95 and their takeover of Kabul in 1996 indicated a change in balance of power in the country (Das 2006, 11). Inasmuch as the Taliban established some level of security in the areas they controlled, the restrictions they imposed on women amounted to discrimination (Das 2006, 11). This was done through policies announced through edicts and enforced by the Ministry of Prevention of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue (UNCHR 1999). For example, the Taliban issued an edict banning all women from obtaining public education in 1997. Hundreds of schools were set up in private homes by Afghan women and this was met with another edict in 1998 limiting private education to teachings in the Quran and girls under the age of eight (PBS 2007). With the new militant rule of the Taliban, women lost their emancipation and rights. These included the right to education, freedom of expression and association, the right to education and work, and the right to access healthcare (Department of State 2001). Extremely rigid ideas about what constitutes suitable femininity in an Islamic state became a serious issue (Das 2006). After their emergence in the mid 1990's the Taliban occupied over 90% of Afghanistan (Das 2006). The decrees they made in these parts of Afghanistan held firm and norms pushed concerning women became a concern internationally. Some of the restrictions imposed which are discussed below include restricting women and girls' access to education, restricting women's access to healthcare, forcing nearly all women to quit their jobs, limiting women's ability to move and imposing a strict dress code (Department of State 2001). Some of these restrictions were enforced through degrading, cruel and inhumane punishment and ill-treatment which included public beatings by Taliban police (Das 2006, 15).

3.1.1. Political Status

After the Taliban's takeover, there was reportedly no rule of law, constitution or independent judiciary (ECOSOC 2000, 4). The religious police and Islamic courts of the Taliban applied their interpretation of Islamic law and punishments frequently after hasty summary trials (ECOSOC 2000, 4). Immediate punishment was reportedly imposed on those who disobeyed the Taliban edicts by the religious police (ECOSOC 2000, 10). Furthermore, judicial procedures differed based on the local commanders and regions. The Ministry of Women's affairs was abolished. It had been established to promote women's empowerment and development. Women were excluded from

political participation and representation (ECOSOC 2000, 10). Women were prohibited from organising into community or political organizations or speaking publicly. There was no civil society and women were not given political or civil rights (ECOSOC 2000, 10). Instead, a strict interpretation of Islamic law was imposed. Women were prohibited from voting, joining political parties or holding public office (ECOSOC 2000, 10). The male-dominated authorities largely disregarded or silenced the views and concerns of women. They were also unable to socialize in sizeable groups or participate in groups with other women or men. The Women's Political Empowerment Index captures the degree to which women enjoy civil liberties, are represented in politics and can participate in civil society (V-Dem 2023). It ranges from 0 to 1 (most empowered) (V-Dem 2023). Afghanistan was estimated to have a score of 0.04 in both 1999 and 2000, indicating very low levels of opportunities and legal protection for women in the economic sphere likely due to women's exclusion from the political sphere (V-Dem 2023).

3.1.2. Economic Status

Women were banned from working outside the home when the Taliban took over (Das 2006). However, in 1999, women's work restrictions were loosened. A decree by the Taliban allowed widows to seek employment if they had no means of supporting themselves (UNHCR 1999). Unfortunately, many widows were ignorant of these modifications (UNCHR 1999). On top of this, there were very limited work opportunities. Women could now work in the health sector as nurses and doctors (UNHCR 1999). They could however only treat other women. Health non-governmental organisations noted that there was a lack of qualified female personnel which limited the recruitment of female staff (US Department of State 2000). A few women were allowed to work for NGO's and international agencies but were prohibited from working in their employer's offices (UNCHR 1999). They had to travel directly from their homes to the project sites where they were employed. Restrictions were yet again imposed in 2000 when the Taliban decreed that women were banned from working for the United Nations and NGO's (ECOSOC 2000, 9). The only exception was in the field of healthcare. The implementation of this ban was inconsistent. Female staff were advised to stay at home to avoid conflict. The Taliban also issued a decree to close the World Food Programme widow's bakeries (Das 2006, 27). These gave food to female headed homes as well as war widows. This led some women to beg and rely on charity for survival (Das 2006, 27). The Gender Development Index tracks gender disparities in performance across three key areas of human development: education, command over economic resources, and health

(UNDP 2023). Developmental equality between the genders is indicated by a value of 1, whereas values further away from 1 indicate less developmental equality (UNDP 2023). In 1999, the GDI value of Afghanistan was 0.523 indicating that women's development was 52.3% of men's (UNDP 2023). The Human Development Index value for females was 0.205 whereas the value for men was 0.392, making the gender gap -0.187 (UNDP 2023). The scores reflect overall low development; however, women had made less progress towards development than men in education, health and control over financial resources (UNDP 2023). This was due to the Taliban's oppressive policies which disproportionately impacted on women's status. Furthermore, the Gross National income per capita for females was \$259 whereas the Gross National Income for men was \$1,879 thereby making the gender gap -\$1620 in 1999 (UNDP 2023). Women earned less income than men on average. The World GNI per capita was \$7.311 for females and \$13.986 for males (UNDP 2023). This showed that Afghan men and women earned less than the global average.

In 2000, Afghanistan's GDI value was 0.515, this changed from 1999 value by -0.008 (UNDP 2023). It indicates that on average women's development was 51.5% of men's during this time. The Human Development Index value for females was 0.204, while it was 0.396 for males making the gender gap (-0.192), meaning gender disparities slightly increased during this time (UNDP 2023). The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita for females was \$ 237, while it was \$1,726 for males, making the gender gap -\$1489 in 2000 (UNDP 2023). The World GNI per capita was \$ 7.559 for females and \$14.418 for males, making the gender gap -\$6.859 in 2000 (UNDP 2023). Therefore, Afghan women earned significantly less than the global average. Overall, women experienced lower levels of development compared to men. There was a significant gender gap in Afghanistan based on the data. The female labour force participation rate was 16.6% in 1999 and 16.5% in 2000 compared to 81% for men in both years (World Bank 2023).

3.1.3. Educational Status

Females above eight were banned from attending school (Das 2006). Women were no longer allowed to teach at boys' schools (UNCHR 1999). Historically, teachers in Afghanistan have been predominantly women. Despite schools for boys not being closed during this period, they faced a significant shortage of teachers (U.S Department of State 2000). Afghanistan's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural

Rights were violated by the Taliban's lack of official commitment to educating girl children (UNCHR 1999). In 1998 there was an increase in the number of female traditional birth assistants, vaccinators and nurses (UNHCR 1999). This was due to training provided by the humanitarian assistance community. There were also 40 female medical students at the university of Kabul at the end of 1999 (Das 2006). Despite this, the formal ban on girls attending school remained in place. They were only allowed to access instruction from mosques, which was therefore religious education (UNCHR 1999). Only primary education, provided by the Taliban Ministry of Religious Affairs, was made available to girls between the ages of 5 and 10 (UNCHR 1999). The Qur'an was the focus of their studies although other texts covered Science, Mathematics and Social Science at the elementary level (ECOSOC 2000, 7). There was a ban on secondary and tertiary education for women (ECOSOC 2000, 7). One can only wonder how another generation of women doctors would emerge without secondary or tertiary education. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and not the Ministry of Education managed the girls' schools (Das 2006). Segregation was required for female students to attend these schools. Das (2006) states that in 1999, there was a growing number of girls gaining access to informal schools provided by NGO's as well as home schools. Approximately 7% of 4.4 million children received assistance from these schools. The prolonged armed conflict negatively impacted schooling for both girls and boys. In 1999, the expected years of schooling for females was 3.4 years, and 6.6 years for males (UNDP 2000). The gender gap was therefore (-3.2 years) (UNDP 2000). The mean years of schooling for females was 0.6 years, while it was 1.9 years for males, making the gender gap (-1.3 years) (UNDP 2000). In 2000, the expected years of schooling for females was 3.7 years and 7 years for males, making the gender gap (-3.3 years) (UNDP 2000). The mean years of schooling for females was 0.6 years, and 2 years for males, making the gender gap (-1.3 years) (UNDP 2000). Hence, women were expected to receive less years of schooling and have completed less years of schooling on average compared to men. Women generally had less access to education and completed fewer years of schooling than men due to the educational restrictions above.

3.1.4. Healthcare Status

Health facilities were off limits for many women. This is because, unaccompanied women were not permitted in hospitals (European Parliament 2023, 4). Women needed to have a male escort who is a relative if they wished to venture outside of the house (European Parliament 2023, 4). When outside the home, women had to be fully covered in a chadari with only a mesh opening to breathe and see (Das 2006, 24). The return of the Taliban resulted in the increased threat to women's security both physically and sexually. Furthermore, the existence of women was in danger. Das (2006) argues that the behaviour and honour of women became essential to the Taliban's self-made image of being the nation's protector. The status of women's health was significantly impacted by patriarchy (Goodson 2002). Public bathhouses for women were closed by the Taliban which were crucial hygiene facilities for homes lacking water (Goodson 2002, 14). The bathhouses were also used as meeting places for women for social and celebratory purposes (Goodson 2002, 14). Discrimination against women in areas controlled by the Taliban became their official policy (Das 2006). It was apparent in all aspects of women's lives. The restrictions imposed on women regarding segregation of transportation, movement and dress code all made it difficult for women to access medical care (Goodson 2002). There was a lack of female professionals in health-related fields (Das 2006, 25). This resulted in conservative men not permitting their wives to visit medical centers (Das 2006, 25). The few available healthcare resources were poured into the hospitals for men (Physicians for Human Rights 2000, 65). Male doctors were forbidden from treating women unless they were fully dressed in a burqa (Goodson 2002, 14). Furthermore, male doctors were not permitted to touch women and had to diagnose them without doing so, making proper diagnosis and treatment difficult (Das 2006, 25). Women were generally excluded from healthcare. Women of childbearing age were seen as the most vulnerable group (US Department of State 2000). Due to cost issues, women were often taken to practitioners in holistic medicine. Some provision was made for women to get treatment in Kabul's hospitals from June 1998. However, it was still difficult for most of them to do so, particularly widows in Kabul, who lost male family members, who would have had to escort them there (US Department of State 1999). However, it is important to note that by late 1999, hospitals in Kabul were now treating women (Das 2006, 25). The exception was the military hospital there. Only one maternity hospital existed in the country (Das 2006). The life expectancy at birth for females in 1999 was 56.3 years, and 53.4 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 2.9 years.

This means that females were predicted to live longer than men by 2.9 years. In 2000, the life expectancy at birth for females was 56.9 years and 53.8 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 3.1 years (UNDP 2023). Females were expected to live longer than men. The fertility rate (total births per woman) in 1999 was 7.6 and in 2000 the fertility rate was 7.5 (UIS 2023). Higher fertility rates are often associated with lower levels of education (World Bank Female Education and Childbearing 2015). Lower fertility rates may also reflect better access to healthcare including maternal and child health services (WHO 2023). Furthermore, lower fertility rates may indicate that women have more control over their reproductive choices (UNFPA 2023). The maternal mortality ratio in Afghanistan was estimated to be 1346 per 100 000 live births in 2000 (WHO 2023). This was very high showing a severe problem with Afghanistan's maternal health.

3.1.5. Security

There were reports of women being secretly trafficked and the mistreatment of women from minority communities according to the Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (ECOSOC 2000, 5). In 1999, war related abuse of women was said to have decreased in urban areas, especially cities such as Kabul, Herat and Mazar (ECOSOC 2000, 7). However, women remained at risk of physical abuse due to the official apparatus dealing with Taliban rule infractions (ECOSOC 2000, 7). Women who disobeyed the Taliban edicts were attacked by the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice members using objects which resembled leather cricket bats (ECOSOC 2000, 11). The religious police targeted women's sensitive areas, such as their breasts, knowing that they were less likely to reveal the bruises to family members (ECOSOC 2000, 7). This was done immediately without the right to be heard or due process (Goodson 2002, 17). Women could be punished for being without a male relative, laughing too loudly, allowing their ankles to show and for wearing the wrong kind of burqa amongst other reasons (Goodson 2002, 17). Women were also unable to engage in leisure activities at home. All they could do were chores. Regarding matters of "morality" such as adultery and fornication, women who transgressed the law were publicly whipped in front of large crowds in a stadium (ECOSOC 2000, 7). Hudood refers to offenses requiring certain punishments under Islamic law (Lau 2007). Hudood crimes include adultery, alcohol consumption, homosexuality and theft amongst others (Lau 2007). Ministry officials were adamant that such punishments would remain in place (ECOSOC 2000, 7). Women were easily punished for adultery and fornication. This contrasted to how challenging it was for women to prove rape when it occurred (ECOSOC

2000, 7). In addition to normal evidentiary requirements, women needed the testimony of four witnesses (ECOSOC 2000, 7). Rape victims risked being flogged for adultery or fornication if they failed to prove that they were raped (ECOSOC 2000, 7).

3.2. IRAQ

3.2.1. Political Status

Compared to other Middle Eastern women, Iraqi women are argued to have historically had more rights (HRW 2003). They were guaranteed equal rights, and laws were established to ensure their rights to vote, own property, attend school and run for political office in the Provisional constitution of 1970 (HRW 2003). However, in the period before the intervention, their status had diminished due to the impact of U.N sanctions along with changes in law that limited women's freedom, to placate conservative tribal and religious groups (HRW 2003). A combination of legal, political and economic factors negatively impacted on women's rights and status. The authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein restricted women's ability to participate in politics along with the absence of democratic institutions (Al Ali 2009, 51; HRW 2003). Numerous decrees were issued, and laws passed that had a detrimental impact on women's legal position under the criminal justice system, labour code and personal status laws (HRW 2003). The Gender Inequality Index assesses gender inequality in three important areas: labor market, empowerment, and reproductive health (UNDP 2023). Gender inequality is defined as the loss in human development resulting from the accomplishment gap between males and females (UNDP 2023). The Gender Inequality index ranges from 0 to 1. A high GII value indicates high inequality between men and women, while a low value indicates low inequality between men and women (UNDP 2023). In 2001, the Gender Inequality Index value for Iraq was 0.646 changing to 0.641 in 2002 (UNDP 2023). The GII values for both years indicated notable gender disparities across economic activity, health and empowerment (UNDP 2023). The share of seats in parliament for females was 7.6%, while it was 92.4% for males, making the gender gap -84.8% in 2001 and 2002 (UNDP 2023). Women had little influence on decision-making processes concerning issues that impacted their lives because they were underrepresented in the government, civil service and judiciary (Human Rights Watch 2003). Furthermore, women's voices were also repressed because the government prohibited or controlled women's organizations (Oxfam 2018). According to the Women's Political Empowerment Index, Iraq scored 0.27 in 2001 and 2002 (V-Dem 2023). It indicates substantial gaps in the political empowerment of women ranging from 0 to 1 with 1 being most equal, Iraq

had a score of 0.25 in 2001 and 2002 (V-Dem 2023). The score shows low levels of women's political participation.

However, it is important to note that the position of Kurdish women in Northern Iraq appeared to be different from that of the rest of the country during this time (1991-2003) as the area was mainly self-governing due to a no-fly zone enforced by French, British and American warplanes (CRS 2006, 5). As such, some believed that Kurdish-Iraqi women were in a better position compared to their counterparts as they were allowed to participate in the Kurdistan Regional Government (CRS 2006, 5). Furthermore, they were allowed to form women's organizations and networks to increase women's engagement in the political and public spheres (CRS 2006, 5).

3.2.2. Economic Status

Women and girls were disproportionately affected by the economic consequences of U.N sanctions (1990-2003) imposed on Iraq after the Gulf war (HRW 2003). The economy virtually collapsed, and inflation soared (Al Ali 2005, 747). There was a lack of access to employment. Before 1991, women had the region's highest employment rate, estimated at 23%. This dropped to 10% by 1997 (Al Ali 2009, 47; UNDP 2000). Legal changes in favour of men and social norms that discouraged women's work outside the home restricted women's participation in the labour market (HRW 2003). This was done to ensure employment for men. According to the Gender Inequality Index, the labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) in 2001 was 9.9% for women and 74.5% for men (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was therefore -64.6% (UNDP 2023). In 2002, the rate was 10.2% for females and 74% for males (UNDP 2023). Women's dependence on men thus increased as the economic sanctions limited the opportunities, they had to participate in the job market. Women were forced back into traditional roles of mothers and housewives (Al Ali 2005, 745). There was a sharp decline in women's monthly earnings in the public sector which could not keep up with rising inflation and the cost of living (Al Ali 2009, 47). The Gender Development Index value for Iraq in 2001 was 0.736, indicating that the female human development was 73.6% that of men, highlighting the need for further improvements (UNDP 2023). The Human Development Index value for females was 0.478 and that of males was 0.650, making the difference -0.172 (UNDP 2023). This means that compared to men, women were disadvantaged regarding human development in income, education and health (UNDP 2023). The Gross National Income per capita was \$1,440 for females and \$14,446 for males, making the gender gap -\$13.006 (UNDP 2023).

Women therefore on average earned much less income compared to men. The World GNI was \$7.709 for females and \$14.546 for males making the gender gap -\$6.837. Iraqi men earned close to the world average whereas Iraqi women earned much less. In 2002, the GDI value for Iraq was 0.738 meaning their development was 73.8% that of men. The HDI value for women was 0.480 and that of males was 0.651 As such men experienced higher levels of development than women. Additionally, the Gross National Income per capita was \$1,333 for females and \$12, 846 for males, making the gender gap (-\$11,514). Iraqi women earned less than the world average income given that the World GNI was \$7.829 for females and \$14.694 for males making the gender gap -\$6.865 (UNDP 2023).

Given that the state had stopped providing free services such as transportation and childcare, many women reported that they could not afford to work anymore (Al Ali 2009, 47). Women were reluctant to leave their children with neighbours and other family members due to insecurity (Al Ali 2005, 748). There were instances where young girls were compelled to do domestic duties and earn informal wages to support their families, which affected their schooling (Al Ali 2005, 748). Women's household responsibilities increased while their access to education and work decreased (Amnesty International 2005, 9). They had more responsibilities in terms of caring for their families and children. There were also many widows and female-headed households (Al Ali 2009, 47). Many men left the country to seek work abroad, resulting in many women being left to head their households while they were restricted from working outside the home (Amnesty International 2005, 5).

3.2.3. Educational status

The inability of families to send their children to school led to a sharp increase in the gender gap in school enrolment and ultimately in female illiteracy (HRW 2003). The expected years of schooling for females was 7.8 years and 10.4 years for males, making the gender gap -2.6 years in 2001 (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling for girls was 4.7 years and 6.6 years for boys, making the gender gap 2 years (UNDP 2023). In 2002, the expected years of schooling was 8.1 years for females and 10.8 years for males, making the gender gap (-2.7 years) (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling was 4.8 years for girls and 6.8 years for boys, making the gender gap (-1.9 years) (UNDP 2023). Thus, women had less access to education compared to men and completed less years of schooling than them. Many families chose to keep their children at home

when facing the challenge of limited resources (Al Ali 2009, 47). Schools became segregated between sexes, but even at coeducational institutions, interactions between girls and boys grew less frequent because girls worried about their reputations and avoided circumstances where they would end up alone with a boy (Al Ali 2009, 48). Teenage girls also complained about increased social restrictions (Al Ali 2005, 751). Adult illiteracy amongst Iraqi women was argued to have increased during this period (World Bank 2023). According to the Gender Inequality Index, the population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) in 2001, was 24.4% for women and 40.6% for men (UNDP 2023). Hence the gender gap was -16.3%. In 2002, the figure for females (age 25 and older) became 25.3% and 41.5% for males making the gender gap -16.2% (UNDP 2023). Women's literacy levels were therefore lower than men's.

3.2.4. Healthcare Status

Women had difficulties accessing proper healthcare, particularly reproductive health. Additionally, they suffered from malnutrition, anaemia and other diseases (HRW 2003). The sanctions also impacted the availability of staff in health facilities, medicine and equipment (HRW 2003). Many women could not afford or obtain medical care (HRW 2003). In 2001, the fertility rate (births per woman) was 4.8 and 4.7 in 2002 which was high (UIS 2023). The adolescent birth rate was also high at 60 births/ 1000 women aged 15-19 in 2001 and 61.1 births/ 1000 women in 2002 (UNDP 2023). This may have signified poor access to healthcare and family planning. The risk for expectant mothers and their babies increased dramatically (Amnesty International 2005). Between 1989 and 2002, the number of women dying during pregnancy and childbirth nearly tripled from 117 deaths per 100 000 live births to 310 deaths per 100 000 live births according to a 2003 report by the United Nations Population Fund. However, according to the Gender Inequality Index, the maternal mortality ratio in 2001 was low at 76 deaths/ 100000 live births compared to 74 deaths/ 100000 live births in 2002 (UNDP 2023). Women's life expectancy at birth in 2001 was 70 years for females and 64 years for males, making the gender gap 6 years (UNDP 2023). In 2002, the life expectancy at birth for women was 70.1 years and 64 years for men (UNDP 2023). Women were therefore expected to live longer than men.

3.2.5. Security

Due to economic hardships many women were forced into prostitution as a means of survival (Al Ali 2009). Such a development caused great distress in a culture emphasizing that a woman's 'honour' was viewed as a reflection of her family's honour (Al Ali 2009, 48). At first, prostitution was supported by the regime, and they positioned themselves as the primary clientele along with a new class of war and sanctions profiteers (Al Ali 2009, 48). Still, Saddam Hussein opportunistically started a religious campaign (al-hamla imaniya), in response to a shifting social climate in which a population became increasingly allured by social conservatism, religion as well as an effort towards increasing regional and international support among the Islamic ummah (Al Ali 2009, 48). Honour killings increased during this time. Women were perceived as needing protection because they were vulnerable to rumours, damaged reputation, temptation and prostitution (Al Ali 2009, 49). To restore the honour of a family, brothers and fathers of women who were known to have or were merely suspected of having violated social norms particularly related to remaining virgins before marriage could kill them (UNCHR 2002, 12). Apart from adultery, other reasons used to justify the murder of women included women's refusal to wed against their will along with moving out of their homes to wed with a man of their own choice (Amnesty International 2005, 17). An estimated 4000 women and children had been victims of honour killings according to a report by the U.N Special Rapporteur for violence against women (UNCHR 2002, 12). This resulted in the government condemning prostitution and engaging in violent campaigns to end it. For example, it was widely reported that 300 alleged prostitutes and "pimps" were beheaded in the year 2000 by a group of young men associated with Saddam's son, Uday (Amnesty International 2000).

Legal reforms aimed at addressing honour killings were introduced in Kurdistan between 2000 and 2002. Before then, perpetrators of such crimes were either not prosecuted or received light sentences (Amnesty International 2005, 17). Despite the changes, Kurdish women's organizations worried that honour killings were being covered up to avoid facing legal consequences. The Women's Information and Cultural Center (WICC) reported cases where women were dying under suspicious circumstances and relatives of the deceased claimed that it was by accident (Amnesty International 2005, 19). Furthermore, they suspected that the bodies of victims of honour killings had been hidden, mutilated or disfigured to hide their identities (Amnesty International 2005, 19). The government imposed the idea that women had to have a male escort when outside the home.

Furthermore, women under the age of forty-five were prohibited from leaving the country without the presence of a male first kin (Al Ali 2009, 48).

A study carried out by the NGO Physicians for human rights (2003) in Southern Iraq revealed that about half of the women and men surveyed believed that men had the right to beat their wives if they defied them. The high degree of acceptance of violence within marriage was supported by legislation in Iraq. Based on the Penal code of 1969 under article 41(1) which was still in effect before the invasion, a husband who disciplines his wife was not criminally liable for doing so (Amnesty International 2005, 21). The share of women who experienced violence by an intimate partner in 2001 and 2002 was 32.3% and 31.8% respectively according to the New Parline Inter Parliamentary Union (2023). The freedom to choose a partner was denied to many women and girls in Iraq. Those who opposed forced marriage risked violence or death (UNCHR 2002, 15). The increased violence in the family during this period may be attributed to the combined effects of conflict, economic hardships and political pressure under Saddam Hussein's government, according to women's rights activists (UNCHR 2002, 12).

3.3. LIBYA

3.3.1. Political Status

After years of relative isolation, Libya was reintegrated into the international system in the early 2000's. Libya had been the target of sanctions by the United Nations and U.S due to its involvement in a series of terrorist bombings (Freedom House 2010, 1). Libya decided to abandon its chemical, nuclear and biological weapons programs in 2003 (Freedom House 2010, 1). Most of the sanctions imposed on Libya were lifted in 2004 (Freedom House 2010). To rebuild its image and relations in the international system Libya made promises of reform relating to personal freedoms, human rights and economic liberalization (Alshaibani 2011, 4). Promoting women's status was part of the transformation of Libyan society. In addition to promoting women's equality as citizens, laws were introduced to reduce gender-based discrimination and Gaddafi also sought to increase women's participation in work and education (Idris 2017, 3). At the time just before the intervention, women were now better able to participate in the political, social and economic aspects of life in Libya (Idris 2017). The states initiatives were met with some resistance from Libya's extremely conservative patriarchal traditions and tradition which still supported discrimination against women (Idris 2017, 3). There was also a gap between the rhetoric promoting women's status and the reality on the ground (Alnaas and Pratt 2015, 3).

The Charter on the rights and duties of women of 1997 guaranteed women's participation in the country's governing institutions. Women were invited and encouraged to participate in the Basic People's Congresses (local assemblies) (Freedom House 2010, 19). No formal restrictions prevented them from serving in leadership positions (OHCHR 2010). Despite this, their political participation remained limited due to the male-dominated political system. According to the women's political empowerment index, which ranks from 0 to 1, with 1 being most empowered, Libya scored 0.21 in 2009 and 2010 (V-Dem 2023). It shows that there were significant limitations to women's political participation. Their civic and political rights were also severely limited by the nature of the government and the requirement that all political action be approved by the authorities (Alnaas and Pratt 2005, 3). Women played a marginal role in the country's institutions. Only 36 women gained seats in the 468 seat General People's Congress (parliament), in the indirect elections of March 2009 (Freedom House 2010, 20). People's committees were arranged hierarchically to facilitate indirect elections (Freedom House 2010). The General People's Congress chose the head of state. Only a few women secured positions in the executive structures of government (Alnaas and Pratt 2015, 4). According to the Gender Inequality Index, the Gender Empowerment Measure and the Interparliamentary Union, in 2009 and 2010, the share of seats in parliament women was 7.7% and 92.3% was taken by men (UNDP 2023). This meant the gender gap was -84.6% (UNDP 2023). In 2010, there were no women in the General People's Committee. Only three women have ever been appointed to the committee and held positions as ministers of social affairs, culture and media (Freedom House 2010, 20). There were also few female ambassadors (Freedom House 2010). This is despite the discourse on women's rights. The regime hesitated to appoint women in senior positions (Azzuz 2014, 152). In the local sphere, women were free to contribute to discussions and debates in the Basic People's Congresses along with men. However, social norms encouraged women to stay out of the public eye and as such fewer women than men participated in the congress (Idris 2017, 3). Women's participation in the Basic People's Congress was even less likely in the rural areas (OHCHR 2010). In some instances, women who chose to attend did so indirectly due to conservative social beliefs (OHCHR 2010). This was done through attending special segregated sessions at private girls' schools or other public buildings (OHCHR 2010). Additionally, some women only attended because it was mandatory to do so at times. Women took up positions in the secretariats of the Basic People's Congresses but were generally limited to the role of secretary for social affairs (Freedom House 2010, 20). This

position replaced that of women's affairs in the 1990's. Both men and women were banned from involvement in political parties by the state (Human Rights Watch 2009). This ban was consistent with Gaddafi's intention to suppress organized opposition and maintain strict control over civil society. Independent gatherings such as demonstrations and strikes were also banned under 1972 law no. 45 (Freedom House 2010). Freedom of expression was limited. Individuals could be imprisoned for criticizing Gaddafi or the political system (Human Rights Watch 2009). Provisions were also made in the penal code that criminalized insulting public officials or opposing the Revolution's ideology (Freedom House 2010). However, some room for complaints was made in terms of the media and in some instances the courts concerning issues such as corruption and inefficiency and the actions of the security forces (Human Rights Watch 2009). As a result, women had a slightly higher degree of liberty in discussing issues related to women's rights and domestic violence, despite it being evident that the state dictated which issues were allowed and which were not (Freedom House 2010).

3.3.2. Economic Status

The status of women under the Gaddafi era was mixed. Real advancements were made in education and employment (Idris 2017, 3). In 2009, the GDI value for Libya was 0.957 (UNDP 2023). In 2010, the GDI value for Libya was 0.965 (UNDP 2023). This meant Libya had a relatively high level of gender development and equality. There were more women than men in university and more women in the Libyan workforce than in most Arab states when Gaddafi was overthrown (Hilsum 2014). Women were encouraged to participate in the workforce and utilize their economic rights and they did so, especially among the elite (Freedom House 2010, 14). Women successfully entered male dominated fields including medicine, business and law (Hilsum 2014). Even so, women were still underrepresented in the workforce. According to the GII in 2009, the labour force participation rate for ages 15 and older was 33.8% female and 61.3% male, making the gender gap -27.5% (UNDP 2023). In 2010, the rate was 33.9% for females and 61.3% for males, making the gender gap -27.4% (UNDP 2023). Indicating substantial regulatory and legal obstacles to women's participation (World Bank Gender Portal 2023).

Women who were employed typically worked in professions like education, historically associated with women (Azzuz 2014, 152). Regardless of some gender-based limitations, women were generally free to select their professions. Based on the 1998 General People's Congress Resolution,

any woman capable of working must do so (Freedom House 2010, 16). Moreover, according to the Consolidation of Freedoms Law no.20 of 1991, both men and women had the freedom to choose the suitable work (Consolidation of Freedoms Law 1991). They were particularly encouraged to work in the military and there were special female police forces, bodyguards as well as military academies (Alnaas and Pratt 2015, 3). However, these kinds of jobs were considered shameful because many Libyans viewed them as opposing tradition and culture (Freedom House 2010, 16). To enter the women's police academy, women still needed permission from their fathers (Freedom House 2010, 16). Women could not be employed in difficult to dangerous jobs based on Article 95 of the Labour Law (Libyan Labour Law 1970). Furthermore, according to Article 96, women could not exceed 48 hours of work per week inclusive of overtime and could not work between 8pm and 7am unless granted permission by the Workforce, Training and Employment Secretariat in the General People's Committee (Freedom House 2010, 17). Clinics and hospitals resorted to employing foreign women as such rules did not apply to them (Freedom House 2010, 17). Regardless of the states' position on women's employment, which welcomed diversity concerning women's career choices, women continued to mainly work in fields traditionally linked to them like education, secretarial and cleaning work, and health services (Azzuz 2014, 152). About 85% of employed women worked in social services (OHCHR 2010). Libyan men preferred that women work close to home and in work environments where they did not mix with men, which limited women's employment options (Freedom House 2010, 17). The role of women was still mainly seen as being in the home.

According to section 31 of the Labour Law, men and women had to be paid equally if the conditions and nature of their work were the same (Freedom House 2010). Nevertheless, women were usually paid less than men for the same job. The gross income per capita was \$10,431 for females and \$25,487 for males making the gender gap -\$15,057 in 2009 (UNDP 2023). While the World GNI was \$9.189 for females and \$17.189 for males with a gender gap of -\$8000 in 2009 (UNDP 2023). Libya's GNI for women was higher than the World GNI but women still earned less than men on average. In 2010 the GNI was \$11,338 for females and \$25,748 for males, making the gender gap -\$14,410 (UNDP 2023). The World GNI for females was \$9.714 for females and \$17.634 for males, resulting in a gender gap of -\$7.920 in 2010 (UNDP 2023). Libyan women earned more income than the world average but still earned less than Libyan men on average. The Human Development Index value for females in 2009 was 0.717 and 0.750 for males making the

gender gap -0.033 (UNDP 2023). The HDI value for females in 2010 was 0.722 and 0.748 for males, making the gender gap -0.026 (UNDP 2023). The marginal gap in development can be attributed to factors such as access to education and economic participation. As noted above, Libya made advancements in education and employment with men and women having relatively equal access to opportunities. This led to comparable education attainment levels and literacy rates between genders which are important components of HDI. Women also faced challenges in obtaining high level positions in their jobs (Azzuz 2014, 152). Men and women resisted the notion of women holding positions of authority over men (Freedom House 2010). Senior positions were usually awarded to men, even in positions traditionally linked to women (Freedom House 2010). For example, very few women became lecturers or professors. Poverty adversely affected women because of their gender (Azzuz 2014, 152). Jobs traditionally associated with women failed to give them the financial security and independence they needed (Freedom House 2010). No legislation protected women from sexual harassment in the work environment.

3.3.3. Educational status

Women's education was prioritized in Libya. Education was made compulsory in the 1970's through to the intermediate level and was beneficial to women (OHCHR 2010). Education was free of charge (OHCHR 2010). Education was compulsory for children between the ages of 6 to 15 (Carter 2018, 4). Before the intervention, female students tended to perform better than male students. Women were allowed to enter all study fields and the requirements for admission were non-discriminatory (Alshaibani 2011, 3). The expected years of schooling for females in 2009 was 14.5 years and 14.1 years for males, making the gender gap 0.5 years (UNDP 2023). The average years of schooling for females was 7.4 and 6.9 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was therefore 0.5 years (UNDP 2023). In 2010 the expected years of schooling for females was 14.3 years and 13.8 years for males (UNDP 2023). The average years of schooling for females was 7.7 years and 7.0 years for males (UNDP 2023). Hence women were expected to and completed more years of schooling than men. Universities and schools were not separated by gender (OHCHR 2010). Libya achieved universal primary and secondary education access before the 2011 crisis through significant public funding (Carter 2018, 5). According to the GII in 2009, the population with at least some secondary education, aged 25 and older was 53.4% female and 41.6% were males, making the gender gap 11.8% (UNDP 2023). The population with at least some secondary education aged 25 and older comprised 55.5% females and 41.9% males in 2010 (UNDP 2023).

Compared to the region's average literacy rate of 72%, Libya had one of the highest literacy rates with 88%, (81% for women and 95% for men) (Carter 2018, 5). The literacy rate amongst youths (15- 25 years) was 100% (UNESCO 2011, 274). Female youth literacy rates were almost a 100% (WFP 2011). The World Bank found that improved access to education had especially benefited girls (World Bank 2009). The enrolment rates for girls were higher than those for boys from age 12 (World Bank 2009, 74). Libya met the Millennium Development Goals for education (Freedom House 2010). However, what was a concern was the quality of education. Libya was ranked 128 and 138 for primary and secondary education respectively by the Global Competitiveness Report for 2010- 2011 (UNICEF 2018).

3.3.4. Healthcare Status

Healthcare was free to all Libyan citizens. There was equal access to healthcare for men and women (OHCHR 2010). The life expectancy at birth for females in 2009 was 74.8 years and 70.2 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 4.6 years (UNDP 2023). This meant that women were expected to live 4.6 years longer than men. In 2010 the life expectancy at birth for females was 74.9 years and 70.2 years for males (UNDP 2023). Women continued to be expected to live longer than men on average. This may have been due to factors like biological advantages and healthcare utilization. However, the quality of the healthcare system was considered inadequate (OHCHR 2010). Those who could afford it could travel abroad to seek treatment. Some efforts had been made towards improving the healthcare system, including upgrading hospitals (OHCHR 2010). About 99.6% of births were in hospital, of this amount, 85% were free of charge in government hospitals (OHCHR 2009). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2009 and 2010, the fertility rate, that is the total births per woman was 2.6 which was moderate (UIS 2023). Furthermore, according to the GII in 2009, Libya had a GII value of 0.275 (UNDP 2023). This showed favourable conditions concerning reproductive health, economic participation and empowerment. The maternal mortality ratio was 53 deaths/100 000 live births (UNDP 2023). The adolescent birth rate was 5.4 births/1000 women aged between 15 and 19. In 2010, Libya's GII value was 0.280 (UNDP 2023). The maternal mortality ratio was 53 deaths/100000 live births and the adolescent birth rate was 6 births/ 1000 women aged between 15 and 19 (UNDP 2023). The maternal mortality ratio was low as was the adolescent birth rate. Emergency care was also free for all people living in Libya. Prenatal, postpartum and antenatal care was provided for about 92.5% of women (OHCHR 2010). Thus, Libya had the region's lowest mortality percentage and

a high life expectancy (OHCHR 2010). Care was provided for Libyan women equally. There was a drop in the mortality rate amongst all the sections in society due to the rural healthcare system that enabled women to be transferred for free to a more advanced hospital even outside of Libya (OHCHR 2010).

The reproductive health of women was considered a family affair and as such women had limited ability to make their own choices concerning this issue (Freedom House 2010, 22). Despite contraceptives being available for free, due to the sensitivities surrounding sexuality, little information was available in the public sphere concerning sexually transmitted diseases and birth control (Freedom House 2010, 22). Increasing the population was encouraged instead of decreasing it (OHCHR 2009). Women needed to have permission from their husbands to obtain birth control (Ministry of Justice 2010). It was only given to couples where there was mutual consent. The topic of abortion was considered taboo (OHCHR 2009). Abortion was unlawful unless it was required to save the mother's life. If an abortion was carried out without the woman's permission the person who provided the service faced as many as three years imprisonment (Freedom House 2010, 23). According to the penal code under articles 391 and 392, anyone who performs an abortion with the consent of a woman is subject to a minimum of 6 months imprisonment as is the woman who gives her consent or gets an abortion (Freedom House 2010, 23). The penalty was halved under circumstances where an abortion is carried out to protect the 'honour' of the victim (Freedom House 2010). An illustration is where a woman falls pregnant outside of marriage. Some women travelled to Tunisia to get abortions if they could afford it as they were more easily accessible there while others obtained illegal abortions in Libya (Freedom House 2010, 23).

3.3.5. Security

Inasmuch as the state looked to promote the independence and autonomy of women and took steps to deal with violence against them, their security and personal freedom remained limited (Freedom House 2010, 8). Like in other conservative societies, the honour of families rested on women and their compliance with social and moral norms (Freedom House 2010). Regarding freedom of movement, women had the right to move about freely. They did not have to seek permission from their husbands or male relatives to get a passport (Consolidation of Freedoms Law 1991). Women could also travel with their children without permission from their husbands. A husband could

however ask the authorities to prevent a woman from travelling with her children abroad if he feared they would not return due to a dispute (Freedom House 2010, 9). In reality, many women travelled with their husbands or a male relative because of the patriarchal nature of the society (Freedom House 2010, 9). Women who walked alone at night risked verbal harassment as it was perceived as the behaviour of 'loose' women (Freedom House 2010, 10). Unmarried women were also expected to inform their families about the specifics of their outings (Freedom House 2010, 10). The issue of domestic violence in Libya was troublesome. Husbands were not allowed to cause mental or physical harm to their wives based on article 17 of law no.10 of 1984 (OHCHR 2010). However, evidence of injury was needed to prove assault under article 63 of the penal code (Freedom House 2010, 13). The problem of domestic violence was still a taboo issue due to the conservative nature of Libyan society. Publicly airing domestic violence issues was considered shameful. It not only dishonoured the victim but their family as well (Freedom House 2010, 13). Despite previous denial by some officials, awareness around the issue had grown (Freedom House 2010). Still, given the social stigma attached to this problem, many women did not raise their concerns (Freedom House 2010). The fear of rejection by their family and husbands is what prevented many women from coming forward when they experience violence (Freedom House 2010, 13). Nearly all women who came forward with accusations of domestic violence ended up withdrawing their cases (Freedom House 2010, 13). Additionally, there were no shelters for victims of domestic violence. Spousal rape was not considered a crime (OHCHR 2010). Like other kinds of abuse, such issues were viewed as private and associated with a lot of humiliation if publicly reported (Freedom House 2010, 13). Female victims of gender-based violence outside the home were often blamed for the perpetrator's actions (Freedom House 2010). Victims of rape who attempted to press charges faced the possibility of being charged with extramarital sex crimes (Freedom House 2010, 13). Additionally, only the most horrible of rapists were prosecuted. Rapists were expected to marry their victims. This was seen as a solution to 'save' her honour (OHCHR 2010). Although consent was needed from the victim, due to pressure from society, women were often forced into agreeing to such marriages (Freedom House 2010, 13). Thus, the issue of the status of women in Libya was complex.

4. WOMEN'S STATUS DURING OCCUPATION AND AFTER WITHDRAWAL

4.1. AFGHANISTAN

4.1.1. (2006)

4.1.1.1. Political Status

The military action taken by the U.S and her allies after the events of 9/11 lasted for almost 20 years (ECOSOC 2006). An Afghan peace conference was sponsored by the U.N in Bonn Germany less than a year after the Taliban was overthrown by a U.S led coalition in 2001 (ECOSOC 2006). This conference laid the political groundwork for establishing a presidential Afghan republic, restoring the 1964 Constitution as the temporary basic law (ECOSOC 2006). Additionally, the agreement made at Bonn set forth the mechanisms that would oversee the formation of a new Afghan government (ECOSOC 2006). Promoting women's political participation in political discussions and the interim government was one of the mandates (ECOSOC 2006). In 2004, a new constitution was approved to give citizens equal rights (ECOSOC 2006). The new constitution was viewed as being progressive regarding women's rights. However, it was criticized for lacking enforcement and protection of such rights because it did not include a supremacy or remedy clause (Afghan Constitution 2004, 4). Women now had the right to vote and run for office. Article 83(6) encouraged the women's political participation by requiring that each province elect at least two delegates to the House of Representatives (Afghan Constitution 2004, 19). In 2006, 27.3% of member of parliament were women (World Bank 2023). According to a CEDAW report on Afghanistan (2006) women's rights were perceived as being imposed from the outside and women's claim to equality was not widely recognized. Female candidates feared that they would be used to fill quotas and ran independently of any political parties (PBS 2006). They wanted to ensure they had decision-making power and were not merely used as symbols. Afghanistan had a GII value of 0.749 in 2006, indicating a relatively high level of gender inequality (UNDP 2023). The share of seats in parliament was 25.9% female and 74.1% male (UNDP 2023) The Gender gap was -48.1% showing that men had a greater proportion of seats than women. Afghanistan scored 0.5 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index in 2006 which illustrates how much women have access to civil rights, can engage in civic life, and are represented in politics (V-Dem 2023). It has a scale from 0 (least empowered) to 1 (V-Dem 2023). The score shows a moderate

level of empowerment. Even though improvements were made, achieving full gender parity in political empowerment was still challenging. Women continued to face violence and intimidation during this period (PBS 2006).

4.1.1.2. Economic Status

The new constitution encouraged gender equality, educational and job opportunities for women (PBS 2006). Efforts were made into the empowerment and improvement of women's status. Measures were taken to create job opportunities for women and increase their economic participation, including vocational training, establishing women's business associations, education, microfinance and job employment programmes (PBS 2006). For example, in 2002, around \$10 million was allocated to the Women's Affairs Ministry by the transitional government to improve women's standing in society (PBS 2006). The Ministry had numerous offices nationwide, and 75% of its employees were women (PBS 2006). Aiding women in obtaining jobs was one of its key aims. The Women's Affairs Department launched a programme for women who wanted to open their shops in 2005 (PBS 2006). Yet, Afghan women were only still allowed to work in informal sectors such as agriculture (PBS 2006). Women remained in the minority concerning the formal economy in sectors such as healthcare, education and service industries (PBS 2006). Low skill levels and literacy rates were the causes of low participation in the formal economy (PBS 2006). Labour force participation rate for females and males aged 15 and older was 15.5% and 76.4% respectively making the gender gap -61% (UNDP 2023). This meant that men had a much higher labour force participation rate than women. Due to a lack of security, women faced major challenges in selling products. The 2006 Afghan GDI value was 0.560 indicating notable gender disparities between men and women in human development outcomes (UNDP 2023). With women achieving less in education, health and economic resources. The HDI value was 0.270 for females and 0.482 for males making the gender gap -0.212 (UNDP 2023). This means that men had higher levels of human development compared to women. The Gross National Income per capita was \$380 for females and \$2,639 for males in 2006, making the gender gap -\$2,259 (UNDP 2023). Men therefore earned significantly more income than women. However, the GNI per capita for males and females in Afghanistan was much lower than the World GNI which was \$8,936 for females and \$16,698 for males in 2006 (UNDP 2023).

4.1.1.3. Educational Status

Afghan women could now attend university. They also obtained degrees in police work and medicine (PBS 2006). Improvements were also made in women's enrolment and literacy rates. Expected years of schooling for females was 5 years and 10.7 for males, making the gender gap - 5.6 years in 2006 (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling were 0.8 years for females and 2.3 years for males, making the gender gap -1.5 years in 2006 (UNDP 2023). Women were expected to and attended school less than men. Despite the new constitution emphasizing the equality of men and women, most Afghan men did not recognize this (PBS 2006). Women and girls continued to face obstacles in attaining education due to reasons including poverty and security issues, widespread gender discrimination due to social norms and a lack of female schools (UN 2006). Based on UN press releases (2006), 300 schools mainly in the southern region were set on fire and several teachers were killed. This reflected the insecurity in the country. Poverty impacted on female education. Due to household responsibilities many girls missed school and were not considered working children (UN 2006). More girls did not go to school compared to boys. According to estimates by the Afghan Ministry of education (2006), of the 9000 schools in Afghanistan, girl's schools constituted 30%, majority being primary schools. There were worries concerning how many girls would continue pursuing their education due to cultural conservatism and the threat of a Taliban resurgence (PBS 2006). The population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) 1.9% female and 9.5% male making the gender gap -7.6% in 2006 (UNDP2023).

4.1.1.4. Healthcare Status

A study by the Indian Institute of Health Management Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health showed that steady improvements were being made in the Afghan Healthcare system (PBS 2006). One of the key aims of the Ministry was achieving equitable healthcare. In line with this, more female than male patients utilized outpatient services (PBS 2006). Additionally, the poor were more likely to utilize public sector services compared to the non-poor (PBS 2006). 32.2% of women living in rural Afghanistan received care from a skilled provider compared to an estimated 4.6% in 2003 (PBS 2006). Life expectancy at birth was 60.2 years for females and 57.1 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 3.1 years meaning that women were expected to live longer than men (UNDP 2023). This may have been due to improved quality and access to health and maternal care, access to education and awareness of healthcare practices. The fertility rate total

(births per woman) was 6.7 in 2006 which was high and suggests limited access to family planning methods, lack of education and religious and cultural factors (UIS 2023). The degree of female involvement in the health sector had gradually increased in 2006. About 25% of medical school graduates from Kabul Medical University were female (ECOSOC 2006). Maternal mortality rates were high at 1120 deaths/100000 live births (UNDP 2023). This reflected women's lack of accessibility to healthcare, which was due to various factors including discriminatory tradition, lack of health facilities, challenging roads, lack of self-sufficiency and participation of women in their affairs, domestic violence and poverty amongst others (AIHRC 2006). Women in different provinces had varying degrees of access to healthcare. There were no female health workers and doctors in some parts of Central Afghanistan (AIHRC 2006). The adolescent birth rate was 126.1 births/1000 women aged 15-19 which was high and suggested a lack of access to contraceptives and education along with sexual abuse and child marriages (UNDP 2023). Women's healthcare in the southwest provinces (Zabul, Helmand) was only 5-7% (AIHRC 2006).

4.1.1.5. Security

Afghan women continued to face violence after the intervention. Most women in urban and rural areas faced family violence (Amnesty International 2006). Accurate reporting of such incidents was impeded by cultural taboos (Amnesty International 2006). Women also continued to be the targets of physical assaults and harsh punishments mandated by local religious councils (Amnesty International 2006). Furthermore, past violations such as arbitrary detentions, private jails, torturing of detainees and prisoners continued (UNHCR 2007). Some police officers believed that it was legal to torture a subject or offender (UNCHR 2007). Forced marriages and land grabbing were amongst the most common violations. There were no proper courts and no access to justice (UNCHR 2007). In some cases, local courts were influenced by cultural practices. Women who went to court were perceived as horrible and tarnished for doing so (UNCHR 2007). Forced marriage was a serious problem faced by Afghan women. Some forced marriages were used to settle feuds and involved the arrangement of marriage for underage girls with some arrangements being made when the child is born (UNHCR 2007). The AIHRC recorded 144 cases of forced marriage in the Helmand Province (2006). Forced marriages were also attributed to poverty, traditional beliefs, impunity and illiteracy (DESA 2006, 15). Rape continued to be a problem in Afghanistan. Trafficking also became a growing problem with Afghan women being sold and sent to other countries where they were then exploited sexually (DESA 2006, 15).

4.1.2. (2011)

4.1.2.1. Political Status

2011 marked 10 years since the Taliban had been removed from power. The transition process started in the summer of 2011 when international military forces began to transfer control of security in Afghanistan to domestic forces (Oxfam 2011, 5). This was against a backdrop of increasing insecurity as the Taliban insurgency gained ground (Oxfam 2011). According to research conducted by the Asia foundation (2011), many women, including those from low income and rural areas, believed their lives had progressively improved since 2001. However, they now feared that their lives would be miserable again if the Taliban was given some share of power (Asia Foundation 2011). While some argued that the Taliban's attitude towards women had changed for the better, there was little evidence to support this. Prominent women were targeted since 2007 (Oxfam 2011). Afghanistan had 69 female MPs (UNDP 2023). Women had less political representation than men. The share of seats in parliament 27.6% female and 72.4% male making the gender gap -44.7% (UNDP 2023) This was due to the 25% quota system for women which was one of the highest in the world in contrast to the average 19.6% participation rate (Cortright and Wall 2012, 12). Afghanistan scored 0.51 on the women's political empowerment index indicating moderate political empowerment (V-Dem 2023). More needed to be done to address challenges faced by women. (World Bank 2023). The quota system was argued to have expanded women's presence but not their power in government (Cortright and Wall 2012, 12). Only a few female MPs were appointed to the cabinet and lacked decision-making power. Activists claimed that they voted in favour of war lords and their factional and sectarian interests instead of supporting women's rights issues (Cortright and Wall 2012, 10). Women also incurred huge personal costs when they entered public office. They faced death threats, attacks and assassination by anti-government groups in addition to disapproval from their own families (Cortright and Wall 2012, 11). Several women holding public office were killed (Cortright and Wall 2012, 11). Due to their affiliation with the government, all MPs faced intimidation. However, women MPs honour and sexual propriety were frequently questioned (Cortright and Wall 2012, 11). Additionally, they were threatened by the conservative majority of men, religious clerics and former mujahideen commanders in the government (Cortright and Wall 2012, 11). Women demanded greater protection and security, but the Afghan government was unresponsive (Cortright and Wall 2012, 11). They were also slow to prosecuting crimes against women.

4.1.2.2. Economic Status

Afghan women have often been in a disadvantaged position in the labour market (ILO 2012, 33). This was illustrated through gender disparity in employment status. 78% of unpaid family workers were female compared to day labourers, employers, salaried workers and own account workers who were male (ILO 2012, 33). Women in provinces and rural areas typically engaged in home-based income-generating activities such as carpet weaving, sewing and tailoring, agricultural work due to restricted mobility outside the home (ILO 2012, 33). Women had a lower labour force participation rate than men. The labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) was 15.5% female and 76.7% male making the gender gap -61.2% in 2011 (UNDP 2023). Attitudes towards women's economic participation steadily changed with more people supporting it (CFR 2014, 8). Yet, women remained underrepresented in traditionally male dominated areas such as business, the army and police (CFR 2014, 8). Contrarily, they were overrepresented in the informal economy. They also needed improved access to finance services, credit, business education, financial management, mentoring opportunities and technical support (CFR 2014, 8). Women had limited time for formal, paid employment (CFR 2014). This was due to continued high fertility rates and restricted access to childcare (CFR 2014, 8). Many Afghan women spent most of their time caring for their children and doing household chores (CFR 2014). Even though more women worked as public servants, healthcare providers and teachers in cities where access to formal and paid employment was likely higher, these women were still in the minority (CFR 2014, 9). The Gross National Income per capita (2017 PPP\$) was \$538 for females and \$3,431 for males (UNDP 2023). It indicated economic gender disparity in income with women earning much less than men. The GII value of 0.746 showed high levels of gender inequality (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, many women lacked the freedom to make financial decisions even concerning their own money. Afghan's GDI value was 0.642 and its HDI value was 0.334 for females and 0.520 for males (UNDP 2023). Resulting in a gender gap -0.186 meaning that women experienced higher development challenges than men (UNDP 2023).

4.1.2.3. Educational Status

A noticeable achievement in the decade after the intervention was the enhancement of girls' education. It was a main objective of the Afghan Ministry of education and international donors since 2001 (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). Girls and women in Afghanistan could now attend schools, colleges and universities. Some improvements were made regarding the number of

enrolments and the building and rehabilitation of school buildings (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). Yet, they continued to face challenges including early forced marriage, poverty, insecurity and cultural attitudes (Oxfam 2011, 16). Furthermore, a persistent shortage of qualified female teachers and basic materials continued to limit their access to education (Oxfam 2011, 16). Only 28% of school aged girls attended school with enrolment lowest in rural and insecure areas (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). Expected years of schooling for females was 7.2 years and 11.2 years for males, making the gender gap -4 years (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling for females was 1 year and 2.8 years for males, making the gender gap -1.7 years (UNDP 2023). This meant girls were expected to attend school less than boys and completed less years of schooling than boys. Girls in secondary and higher education faced the most obstacles given that primary education was prioritized (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). There were also fewer secondary schools, especially in rural areas, with few students attending due to worsening security, low regard for female education and reduced mobility for girls (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). By the age of 18, only 18% of girls were still enrolled in school in comparison to 42% of boys (Oxfam 2011, 16). Numerous schools across the nation were attacked, destroyed or closed due to the intensification of the insurgency during this time (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). Despite increased accessibility to education compared to the Taliban era, over half of Afghan females did not attend school (CFR 2014, 5). The population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) was 2.0% female and 12.4% male in 2011 (UNDP 2023). The gender gap -10.4% (UNDP 2023). 1.8% of women enrolled in tertiary education (World Bank 2023). The literacy rate for adult females (percentage of females aged 15 and above) was 17% showing that they still faced challenges in obtaining education despite improvements made (World Bank 2023).

Trained professionals preferred to work in safer urban areas leaving millions of girls and women without access to education in rural and districts with instability (CFR 2014, 5). Education also varied by districts, some having made improvements and others not (CFR 2014). The Taliban was in control of many of the low enrolment areas where girls were either banned from attending school altogether or were allowed to do so under strict conditions like following a curriculum approved by the Taliban (CFR 2014,5). Many feared that the Taliban's control over education would increase if they were able to regain control over other territories putting girl's access to education at further risk (CFR 2014, 5).

4.1.2.4. Healthcare Status

Improvements in primary healthcare were made possible through the Ministry of Public Health Basic Package of Healthcare Services (Cortright and Wall 2012, 18). The Ministry of Health prioritised maternal, infant and newborn health (Cortright and Wall 2012, 18). To implement these services, NGOs were contracted. Due to donor funded training initiatives there were an estimated 3275 midwives in 2011 compared to 457 in 2002 (Cortright and Wall 2012, 18). An example of such an initiative was the USAID-funded Community Midwife Education Program, which aimed at training thousands of women to become midwives in rural areas, including those with active anti-government insurgencies (CFR 2014, 5). In 2011, life expectancy at birth was 63 years for females and 59.8 years for males making the gender gap 3.2 years meaning that women were expected to live longer than men (UNDP 2023). The Afghan government also increased access to healthcare by constructing hospitals (CFR 2014, 5). There was also more awareness concerning the importance of basic sanitation and health. Improvements in health were accredited to a higher average age of marriage, increased access to education and maternal care, wider use of contraceptives and lower fertility rates (CFR 2014, 5). Nonetheless, many Afghan girls were still forced to marry right after puberty and give birth before their bodies had fully developed leading to pregnancy related deaths (CFR 2014, 5). There was a high adolescent birth rate of 116.5 births/1000 women aged 15 to 19 (UNDP 2023). The fertility rate total (births per woman) was 6 in 2011 (UIS 2023). While Afghanistan's maternal mortality rate had decreased, it was amongst the highest in the world with increasing risk in remote areas (CFR 2014). The maternal mortality ratio 905.0 death/ 100 000 live births (UNDP 2023). The high rates were also contributed to by women's limited geographical access to prenatal care, clinics and decision making concerning their health (Cortright and Wall 2012, 16). When experiencing complications in childbirth, families often delayed seeking care for expectant mothers and such delays were exacerbated by bad road conditions and far off clinics (Cortright and Wall 2012, 12). Due to a shortage of female healthcare professionals in rural areas, treatment by male doctors was often refused by family members even if a woman was in deep distress (Cortright and Wall 2012, 12).

4.1.2.5. Security

Afghanistan was considered the most dangerous country for women in 2011 (Aljazeera; Amnesty International 2011). There were high rates of violations against women through adult and child prostitution, sexual violence, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices (UN

Women 2013, 18). Furthermore, the daughters or sisters of impoverished opium farmers were kidnapped or traded to pay off their debts because of the government's efforts to eliminate poppy crops (UN Women 2013, 18). Outside of many districts in Kabul, violence continued, and the rule of law was ineffective (UN Women 2013). The dangers of defying gender norms were shown by the killings, particularly shootings of prominent women including media and politicians faced. In the private domain, women also faced various forms of domestic abuse (UN Women 2013, 19). This worsened the violence in an already conflict-ridden society. The dominant view concerning domestic violence remained as being something that can be solved in the private realm (UN Women 2013). As a form of protest, there were an increasing number of cases of self-immolation by Afghan women (UN Women 2013, 19). The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law was passed in Afghanistan in 2009 (UN Women 2013). It criminalized various forms of violence against women such as forced marriage, rape, beating, child marriage and forced immolation amongst others (UN Women 2013). The law was reported as being used in different parts of Afghanistan but unfortunately only in a small percentage of cases (UN News 2011). Although the implementation of the law was increasing, it was argued by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights that Afghanistan had a long way to go before Afghan women were protected and equality upheld (UN News 2011). The inconsistent application of the law had weakened the status of women.

4.1.3. (2016)

4.1.3.1. Political Status

Women's representation in leadership positions had improved in prior years however it was still insufficient as it was mainly symbolic (UNFPA 2016). It was also limited to provincial capitals (UNFPA 2016). Much more needed to be done regarding equality in representation. The share of seats in parliament was 27.4% female and 72.6% male, making the gender gap -45.1% (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, the UN Women's country representative Elzira Sagynbaeva argued at the time that the significant participation of women in the coming district and parliamentary elections would be crucial to the inclusiveness and credibility of the process (UNFPA 2016). Furthermore, it was highlighted that the government had to secure women's rights and their meaningful involvement in peace talks (UNFPA 2016). Traditional social norms such as permission to work and the requirement for a male escort continued to limit women's political participation (U.S State Department 2016, 29). These factors likely influenced the central government's predominantly

male composition along with a gap in education and experience (U.S State Department 2016, 29). Women and men involved in government and politics continued to be threatened and attacked by the Taliban and other insurgent groups (U.S State Department 2016, 29). Many believed the state was unable and unwilling to protect them (U.S State Department 2016, 29). Afghanistan scored 0.5 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index showing moderate levels of women's political empowerment (V-Dem 2023).

4.1.3.2. Economic Status

The U.N acknowledged the increased presence of women in the workforce specifically in the Afghan parliament, ministries and civil society along with their important role in advancing social and economic development (UNFPA 2016). The Afghan government made efforts towards improving women's participation in the economy. In 2016 the government passed the anti-women harassment law to remove restrictions women encounter in social mobility (Kachiar 2019, 19). Although the constitution prohibited discrimination, women continued to experience it. The labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) was 19.8% female and 73% male resulting in a gender gap of -53.2% indicating a sizeable gender disparity in economic participation (UNDP 2023). Based on a survey by the Asia Foundation (2016) 9.4% of women in the study were involved in activity that earned money despite 74% of respondents agreeing that women should be allowed to work outside the home. Women who worked encountered sexual harassment and insults, transport issues and a lack of daycare facilities (UNFPA 2016). There was salary discrimination in the private sector. Female social workers, journalists and police officers were intimidated or abused (U.S State Department 2016, 51). Women experienced hiring practices that favoured men (U.S State Department 2016, 51). Family members also pressured them to stay home (U.S State Department 2016, 51). Married and older women argued that it was harder for them to find work compared to unmarried and younger women (U.S State Department 2016, 51). The 2016 GDI value was 0.682 indicating that women experienced about 68.2% of men's overall development (UNDP 2023). HDI value was 0.371 for females and 0.544 for males making the gender gap -0.173 (UNDP 2023). Women had significantly lower development levels compared to men. (UNDP 2023). The Gross National Income per capita was \$712 for females and \$3,411 for males showing a large gap in levels of income between women and men (UNDP 2023). The world GNI was \$11,243 for women and \$19,926 for men (UNDP 2023). Thus, Afghanistan's GNI was much

lower than the world GNI. The Gender Inequality Index value was 0.692 reflects high levels of gender inequality (UNDP 2023).

4.1.3.3. Educational Status

Significant gains were made concerning the number of girls attending school after the removal of the Taliban from power. Education was mandatory until 9th grade (U.S State Department 2016, 40). The law also guaranteed free education up to and including college level (U.S State Department, 40). The expected years of schooling for females was 7.8 years and 12.5 years for males, making the gender gap -4.7 years, meaning girls were still at a disadvantage compared to boys (UNDP 2023). However, there was a growing erosion of these rights in 2016 with increased attacks on girl's schools. For example, a girl's school was torched in Kabul in January and according to the Ministry of education, 700 schools were shut down due to security concerns in February (Al Jazeera 2016). Furthermore, in the Ghor province, 20 girls were poisoned in May (Al Jazeera 2016). Violence on children, specifically girls occurred in different parts of the country, particularly in Taliban controlled areas (U.S State Department 2016, 41). Mean years of schooling were 1.4 years for females and 3.1 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was -1.7 years, meaning girls completed less years of schooling than boys (UNDP 2023). Children's ability to attend school and that of girls was impacted on by the ANDSF and militant groups use of school buildings (U.S State Department 2016, 41). The population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) was 3.5% female and 14.7% male, making the gender gap -11.2% (UNDP 2023). The population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) was 3.5% female and 14.7% male, making the gender gap -11.2% (UNDP 2023). Other obstacles to girl's education included early and forced marriage, conservative attitudes, poverty, long distances to school, lack of female teachers and lack of family support (U.S State Department 2016, 41).

4.1.3.4. Healthcare Status

Establishing an efficient healthcare system including increasing access to primary healthcare throughout the country was prioritized by international donors and the Afghan government when the Taliban was overthrown (NIH 2021, 1). Important improvements were made such as reductions in maternal mortality rates (UNDP 2023). The maternal mortality rate was 673 deaths per 100000 live births (UNDP 2023). However, this was still high. There was also an increase in basic

healthcare facilities and public awareness of health issues (Kachiar 2019, 15). Life expectancy at birth was 65.1 years for females and 61.2 years for males, making the gender gap 3.9 years (UNDP 2023). Women continued to be expected to live longer than men. The fertility rate total (births per woman) was 5.3 in 2016 which was high (IPU 2023). Nonetheless, the healthcare system worsened as international aid declined with the decision by the U.S on withdrawal in 2010 (World Bank 2018, 18)). According to a World Bank (2018) report, healthcare services had significantly improved between 2004 and 2010 but slowed down between 2011 and 2016 (World Bank 2018, 18). The main exception was the physical ability to provide quality care, which rapidly improved (World Bank 2018, 18). There was also a steady increase in female healthcare workers during this time (World Bank 2018, 18). At least one female health worker (nurse, midwife or doctor) was present in health institutions as of 2015 (Amnesty International 2016). Collaboration between the Afghan government, USAID, and other agencies allowed for the training of thousands of midwives, resulting in improved health outcomes (Kachiar 2019, 15). The World Bank, USAID and European Union provided monetary assistance and other services that improved women's healthcare access in Afghanistan (Kachair 2019). Many pregnancy related deaths were still caused by child marriage (Kachiar 2019, 15). It is important to note that improvements made in healthcare benefited the urban population more than the rural population (Kachiar 2019).

4.1.3.5. Security

Regardless of positive institutional and legislative developments, violence against women continued to be a concern in Afghanistan (UN Women 2016, 2). Women experienced violence in the private and public domains. Between January and August 2016 there were 2621 reported cases of violence (AIHRC 2016). These included 79 sexual assault cases, 733 beatings, 44 forced engagements or marriages and 9 killings (AIHRC 2016). Women became increasingly isolated which created obstacles surrounding their ability to seek help which led to increased substance abuse (UN Women 2016, 2). The small percentage of women in the Afghan police contributed to the underreporting of sexual abuse (Report of the UN Secretary General 2017, 10). Those who provided services for abuse survivors and defended women's rights became targets of harassment and abuse (UN Women 2016, 2). Some of the factors that contributed to the perpetuation of violence against women included the weak rule of law, the disintegration of protective mechanisms, poverty and insecurity and the traditional gender order which placed more importance on men than women (UN Women 2016, 2). 87% of women were argued to have

experienced violence mainly from family members (UN Women 2016, 2). Forms of violence they experienced included rapes and killings, forced and early marriage for the settlement of disputes (baad), sexual harassment and honour killings (UN Women 2016, 2). Punishments for certain crimes of morality like suspected romantic or sexual relationships outside of marriage resulted in the silencing of victims and impunity for perpetrators (U.S State Department 2016, 37). A man convicted of committing an honour killing for finding his wife committing adultery would receive no more than two years imprisonment under the penal code (U.S State Department 2016, 37). Furthermore, secondary violence in the form of virginity tests resulted as a means of rebutting accusations of the above moral crimes (U.S State Department 2016, 34). Violence against women was also a leading factor in self-immolation and suicide cases (U.S State Department 2016, 37).

4.1.4. (2021)

4.1.4.1. Political Status

The U.S began withdrawal on February 29th, 2020 (HRC 2023, 3). On August 15, 2021, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan (EPRS 2023, 7). International forces had left the country by August 30th (EPRS 2023, 7). The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which was in use from 1996 to 2001 was declared in 2021 (HRC 2023, 3). An all-male mostly Pashtun provisional cabinet along with other important roles at the provisional and national levels was announced on September 7, 2021 (UN Women 2021, 6). Other democratic institutions including the legislative were disbanded. The 2004 constitution and all domestic legislation most strikingly the Elimination of Violence Against Women were suspended (UN Women 2021, 6). Additionally, institutions and mechanisms that offered protection from gender-based violence and enhanced gender equality were dissolved (HRC 2023, 3). This destroyed women's access and representation concerning decision-making and their right to political participation (HRC 2023, 3).

In August 2021 women were once again excluded from political and public life. It was announced that no woman would hold senior leadership positions in a Taliban government by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (HRC 2023, 6). Women who held public and political office also feared retribution for holding such positions with the former regime (HRC 2023, 6). The offices for the Ministry of Women's Affairs were transformed into the those of the Ministry of the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice which was known for oppressing women (HRC 2023, 6). Women have been leading peaceful protests since August 2021 to secure their rights to employment, education, freedom of speech and movement, and public engagement (HRC 2023, 6). Excessive

use of force was commonly used in responding to these protests (HRC 2023, 6). Unapproved public protests were banned by the Taliban given the increased hostile environment in the country (HRC 2023, 6). However, peaceful and approved protests were routinely and forcefully shut down (HCR 2023). Women have been brutally beaten, arbitrarily arrested and detained by the Taliban (HCR 2023). Many of these women were released after having guaranteed to stop protesting and keep quiet about their treatment (HRC 2023, 6). Furthermore, some women reported that Taliban officers who were looking for information concerning protest organizers subjected them to gender based violence including sexual assault that often amounted to torture (HRC 2023, 6). Afghanistan scored 0.21 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index (V-Dem 2023). This shows that women had very limited political decision-making and participation. The share of seats in parliament for females was 27.2% and 72.8% for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap -45.6% (UNDP 2023).

4.1.4.2. Economic Status

Many women lost their jobs due to restrictions on their participation and mobility in the public domain (UN Women 2021, 3). In the same way women in different parts of the country faced different challenges, women in different sectors did so too (UN Women 2021). Women in the civil service and media faced more challenges due to the Taliban's position on women's right to work (UN Women 2021, 3). Female civil servants were requested to remain at home, which considerably impacted women's participation in this area (UN Women 2021, 3). Women continued to work in some positions, including security, education, health and airports (UN Women 2021, 3). Female civil servants received reduced pay. The Gross National Income per capita was \$533 for females and \$3,089 for males making gender gap was -\$2,556 (UNDP 2023). The World GNI per capita was \$12,241 for females and \$21,210 for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was -\$8969 (UNDP 2023). The Afghan GNI was far less for both men and women compared to the world GNI. Men continued to earn significantly more than women. The Gender Inequality Index value for Afghanistan was 0.678 suggests gender inequality of a moderate level (UNDP 2023).

One of the first restrictions on women's right to work was on women working in media and journalism (HCR 2023, 9). Over 1700 women were employed as media professionals before August 2021 (HCR 2023). 80% of female journalists lost their jobs after Kabul fell (HCR 2023, 9). They now had limited access to information, were not allowed to attend press conferences and had to cover their faces when appearing on television (HCR 2023, 9). Some of the obstacles to women's economic participation were caused by self-censoring by families and a lack of clarity

concerning in the absence of clear instruction from the Taliban permitting women's full workforce participation (UN Women 2021, 3). All in all, women's working rights backtracked. The GDI value was 0.681 indicating that women experienced 68.1% of the development men experienced (UNDP 2023). HDI value for females was 0.365 and 0.536 for males, making the gender gap -0.171 (UNDP 2023). This showed a significant difference in human development between men and women. The labour force participation rate (ages 15 and older) was 14.8% for female and 66.5% for males, making the gender gap -51.7% (UNDP 2023). This showed significant gender disparities in economic participation. Less women participated in the economy than men.

4.1.4.3. Educational Status

Since the Taliban took over equal access to education for girls changed dramatically. Girls only had access to secondary schools in 7 out of 34 provinces as reported in August 2021 (UN Women 2021, 5). Meaning that girls were denied access to grades 7 to 12 in all other provinces (UN Women 2021). Expected years of schooling for females was 7.7 years and 12.7 years for males making the gender gap -4.9 years (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling were 2.3 years for females and 3.4 years for males making the gender gap -1.1 years (UNDP 2023). Young women also had difficulty accessing higher education. Women were expected to and completed less years of schooling than men. The literacy rate for adult females (percentage of females aged 15 and above) was 22.6% (World Bank 2023). This suggests that the vast majority of adult women in Afghanistan did not obtain adequate education to acquire basic literacy skills possibly due to a lack of access to schools, cultural norms that promote boys' education, and continuing violence and instability that undermine educational infrastructure.

There was neither a decision ensuring equal access to education for boys and girls at all levels nor a national or central policy which meant that advancements made in some districts could be reversed (UN Women 2021, 5). The de facto Minister of Higher Education announced that university co-education was banned (HRC 2023, 8). It was confirmed in September that at all levels, girls and boys would be segregated (HRC 2023, 8). It was also announced that from 18 September, only boys could attend secondary school (HCR 2023). Additionally, only male teachers were permitted to teach. On top of other restrictions, the ban on education made it more difficult for women to obtain essential services like justice and healthcare (EPRS 2023, 9). Afghanistan became the only country in the world where girls and women were banned from attending secondary school and universities (OHCHR 2023). The population with at least some secondary

education (age 25 and older) 6.4% female and 14.9% male, making the gender gap -8.5% (UNDP 2023).

4.1.4.4. Healthcare Status

Health services and infrastructure were mostly dependent on foreign aid and were fragmented and limited prior to the Taliban's return with large deficits in remote and rural areas (UN Women 2021, 6). Aid was frozen in 2021 after the Taliban returned and this impacted on the running of health services not to mention care for girls and women (UN Women 2021, 6). Additionally, due to the economic situation the availability of medical supplies declined, and medical staff had not received their salaries in months (UN Women 2021, 6). The medical situation in 2021 was also worsened by brain drain and the humanitarian crisis (UN Women 2021, 6). Apart from this, women with more complicated health needs such as pregnancy faced other obstacles in accessing healthcare such as long distance to reach health facilities, insecurity and fear, lack of safe transport for women, mobility restrictions (need for a male relative to escort them), and a lack of trained female personnel (UN Women 2021, 6). The 2021 disruption of women's education and training could result in a long-term shortage of female healthcare workers in the country (The Lancet 2021, 1). The gender specific restrictions imposed on women along with restrictions placed on male medical professionals treating women created major challenges for girls and women in accessing health services (UN Women 2021). The life expectancy at birth for females was 65.3 years and 58.9 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap 6.4 years meaning women were expected to live longer than men in 2021 (UNDP 2023). The maternal mortality ratio was still high at 638.0 deaths/100 000 live births (UNDP 2023). The adolescent birth rate was 82.6 births/1000 for women ages 15-19 (UNDP 2023). The high rate may indicate a lack of access to contraceptives and education concerning reproductive health (UN Women 2021). The fertility rate total (births per woman) was 4.6 in 2021 which was considered high and could also be attributed to lack of access to contraceptives (UIS Statistics 2023).

4.1.4.5. Security

Many Afghan women have had to deal with violence being a consistent characteristic of their lives. Women's access to comprehensive and quality access to services for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) survivors deteriorated with the Taliban's return to power (UN Women 2021, 5). Many service providers were forced to shut down due to security concerns with some reporting that they were threatened and targeted for their work supporting girls and women (UN Women

2021, 5). This left women and girls who needed these services without a safe place to find refuge and help (UN Women 2021, 5). Afghan women highlighted that economic demands coupled with the restrictive environment outside the home resulted in significant tensions within the home and increased domestic violence (HRC 2023, 14). The restrictions on women's movements also made it difficult for women to seek help (HCR 2023, 14). Economic difficulties also increased child marriages. Furthermore, Afghan women stressed that the Taliban's return created an environment of increased permissiveness for violence against women due to the systemic gender discrimination against them (HCR 2023, 14).

(2022)

Political Status

Women were systematically excluded from political and public life (UN Women 2022, 3). About 77% of women's civil organizations had no funding and were no longer operating in 2022 (UN Women 2022, 3). The de facto authorities are nearly exclusively Pashtun men. Women were removed from public service posts except where they could not be filled by men in education, health, and certain areas of policing, and in certain circumstances they were asked to send male relatives to replace them (UN Women 2022, 4). The Taliban fully excluded women from a 3-day gathering of approximately 4500 clerics and leaders on June 30 2022, claiming that they would be sufficiently involved through the attendance of their fathers, husbands and sons (UN Women 2022, 4). Pre-existing notions concerning male leadership were legitimized and reinforced undermining women's gains in political status in the last two decades. In May 2022, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) was abolished, deactivating the women's rights machinery in Afghanistan. This emphasized that there is no room for women or entities that advance women's empowerment. After the Taliban took control in August 2021, the Jirga (National Assembly), which is the parliament of Afghanistan and is made up of the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and the Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders), was essentially abolished.

Economic Status

The return of the Taliban created a disabling atmosphere for the participation of women in the workforce, both public and private (UN Women 2022, 6). Restrictions on women's mobility put many communities at risk, many of which were experiencing extreme food insecurity (UN Women

2022, 6). Restrictions on freedom of movement like the Mahram requirement risked limiting access to job opportunities for women headed households. Nearly 100% of female headed households had insufficient food consumption and 85% of female headed households surveyed reported taking drastic measures to cope with this such as borrowing food and reducing food intake compared to 62% of male headed households in January 2022 (UN Women 2022, 6). The Taliban ordered female employees at the Ministry of Finance to send a male family member to replace them regardless of their education level or qualifications (USIP 2022). Additionally, women experienced more income inequality than men (UN News 2024). The Taliban-run Ministry of Economy instructed all local and foreign nongovernmental organizations to fire female employees or risk losing their licenses in December 2022 (CRS 2023). The labour force participation rate (ages 15 and older) was 23.3% female and 77.1% male, making the gender gap -53.8% in 2022 (UNDP 2024). Women participated less than men in the labour market. This reflected the barriers women faced in participating in the labour market such as Taliban imposed work restrictions, mobility restrictions and cultural obstacles. The GNI per capita for females was \$396 for females and \$2256 for males, making the gender gap -\$1860 in 2022 (UNDP 2024). This means that Afghan women earned significantly less than Afghan men. It also suggests women had fewer access to economic opportunities than men. The World GNI per capita for females was \$12,516 for females and \$22,035 for males. Afghan men and women earned less compared to the world GNI showing the underdevelopment of the Afghan economy. Afghan women earned less than Afghan men and women worldwide. Afghanistan had a GDI value of 0.622 and a HDI value of 0.332 for females and 0.534 for males making the gender gap -0.202. This means that women were at a disadvantage regarding overall human development. Furthermore, it had a GII value of 0.665. The rating of 0.665 shows notable gender gaps, with women confronting considerable obstacles concerning their economic prospects, health and empowerment.

Educational Status

It was announced that secondary schools would remain closed for girls by the de facto authorities on March 23, 2022 (UN Women 2022, 5). Restrictions on women and girls' mobility, economic difficulties and a shortage of female teachers contribute to restricting girls access to education at primary level (UN Women 2022, 5). Although women's access to university was not officially restricted at this point, it was constrained by strict dress codes and gender segregation (UN Women

2022, 5). Many women quit attending or did not enrol in university because they did not feel comfortable or safe owing to restrictions targeting them. Some girls also opted out of university education due to pressure from community and family. Female students were suspended from attending university in December 2022 (CRS 2023). Some Afghan women offered informal education to girls in private secret schools (CRS 2023). It is important to note that secondary schools remained opened in places where Taliban support has been low and there has been strong community support for girls' education (CRS 2023). However, Taliban attacks on girls' schools persisted including a suicide bombing in Kabul in September 2022 (CRS 2023). The population with at least some secondary education (ages 25 and older) was 7.0% female and 24.15 male making the gender gap -17% in 2022 (UNDP 2024). Afghan women attained less secondary education compared to men. The expected years of schooling was 8.1 years for females and 13.2 years for males, making the gender gap -5.2 years in 2022 (UNDP 2024). Afghan men were expected to attend school for 5.2 years more than women. The mean years of schooling was 1.2 years for females and 3.9 years for males, making the gender gap -2.7 years. Both averages were low, but Afghan women attended fewer years of school than men, reflecting their challenges in accessing education.

Healthcare Status

The Afghan healthcare system was plagued by service gaps and disparities like access challenges in rural areas, equipment, supply and staff shortages, and specialized care for women notably in reproductive health (UN Women 2022, 5). Some male and female health personnel were subjected to gender segregation prohibiting them from communicating with each other and limited them to treating patients of their gender (UN Women 2022, 5). Nutrition sites report that in certain districts there were no women nurses in 86% of their centres and no women doctors in 71% of their centres (UN Women 2022, 5). The shortage of female health workers was critical in meeting the needs and rights of crisis affected and at-risk girls and women (UN Women 2022, 5). Just 10% of women reported that they could cover their basic health needs given the services available in early 2022 compared to 23% of men (UN Women 2022, 5). Compared to men, Afghan women faced more healthcare barriers. In some areas, the requirement for a male relative to accompany women to health clinics was a major obstacle to their access to healthcare and violated their medical privacy (HRW 2024). The restrictions also hampered women's access to crucial medical support and access

to sexual and reproductive healthcare services like maternal health services, sexual and reproductive healthcare and pre- and post-natal care (HRW 2024). In 2022, the maternal mortality ratio was 620.4 death/ 100000 live births (UNDP 2024). It reflects the risks that expectant mothers experienced during childbirth and reflects the poor access to maternal care Afghan women experienced. The adolescent birth rate was 79.7 births/ 1000 women aged 15-19 in 2022 (UNDP 2024). This was considered high and may signal a lack of access to contraceptives and reproductive education and a lack of autonomy concerning reproductive issues. The life expectancy at birth for females was 66.2 years for females and 59.8 years for males making the gender gap 6.4 years. Women were expected to live longer than men.

Security Status

Violence against women was a widespread issue. Infrastructure to look for support in dealing with GBV was dismantled in August 2021. Since then, risk factors increased including mahram requirements, confinement to the home, economic pressure, displacement, regressive gender norms and erosion of women's rights (UN Women 2022, 7). People felt more entitled to engage in violence against women and girls due to growing hegemony in all spheres because of a lack of operating accountability mechanisms (UN Women 2022, 7). The Taliban severely punished women including imprisonment and lashings and enforced disappearances (HRW 2024). A rise in suicide cases resulted from the increased violence and hopelessness of the situation. There was also a rise in child and forced marriages (HRW 2024). Drivers included lack of educational and professional opportunities for girls, economic pressure, Taliban's practice of forcibly marrying women and girls resulted in families pre-emptively marrying them off (UN Women 2022, 7). Women and girls' access to justice was essentially non-existent. The legal system relied on the Taliban's strict interpretation of Sharia law making it difficult for women to protect their rights areas such as divorce, inheritance and child custody (HRW 2024). The prohibition on women serving as judges and legal practitioners exacerbates these issues by depriving women of access to sufficient legal representation (HRW 2024).

4.1.4.6. Policy

The following is an analysis of the policies implemented during the intervention in Afghanistan. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found that the full degree of USAID, State and DOD efforts to support girls and women in Afghanistan was not quantifiable (SIGAR 2021, 39). According to the OIWI (2004), the U.S secured pledges of over \$8 billion from international donors and spent more than \$4 billion towards reconstructing Afghanistan. Their main goal was funding USAID's Afghan Women Empowerment Program (Shannon 2018, 165). Over 200 different initiatives were implemented by this program in areas such as political and social participation, health, violence against women, education, refugee resettlement, economics and sex trafficking (Shannon 2018, 165). Some perceived the initiatives as colonial feminism which was a step back for U.S-Islamic understanding (Shannon 2018, 165). The U.S spent \$2 billion between 2001 and 2013 (Shannon 2018). However, it could only verify that \$64 million had gone towards women's initiatives (Shannon 2018). It could neither confirm that the funds had reached its intended targets nor achieved its goals (Shannon 2018, 165). Based on SIGAR (2021) USAID estimates, the state and the Department of Defence spent at least \$787,4 million on programs that supported Afghan women in political participation, education, health, economic participation and access to justice between 2002 and 2020. Furthermore, in comparison about \$141. 25 billion was spent on reconstruction assistance from 2002 onwards (SIGAR 2021, 40).

The policies implemented by the U.S and her allies had mixed results. Afghan women's status improved in some ways after the U.S invasion but did not in others (Shannon 2018, 168). Progress was made towards increasing the number of children in school, particularly girls. 3.5 million girls were enrolled in school in 2021 even though the amount of those attending was likely lower (SIGAR 2021, 11). Support for women and girl's education was also high and literacy rates for females rose. Numerous women entered the political sphere. The U.S and other donors strongly supported a constitutional amendment which ensured that 27% of all parliament seats were reserved for women (SIGAR 2021, 12). 25% of district and provincial seats were also reserved for women (SIGAR 2021). Women therefore served as ministers, deputy ministers and civil servants (SIGAR 2021, 12). Regarding health, there was a reduction in the maternal mortality ratio. Between 2000 and 2018, the number of trained midwives increased from an estimated 467 to 4000 (SIGAR 2021, 11). Furthermore, the proportion of health facilities with at least one female health

worker increased from 25% to 92% between 2002 and 2017 (SIGAR 2021, 11). Compared to the pre-intervention times, more women were now employed in urban areas and women run businesses. Although the U.S presence enabled women's programs by removing the Taliban from power it also resulted in Afghan women being vulnerable to fundamentalists who claimed to be protecting authentic Islam and Afghanistan from invaders (Shannon 2018, 167). Despite some gains being made concerning women's status, they still faced significant challenges including insecurity and restrictive cultural norms, continued violence and sidelining from the peace process (SIGAR 2021).

The shortfalls of the programs included the fact that less funding was allocated to them compared to that of broader development initiatives and military operations as stated above (SIGAR 2021, 40). Numerous programs established were also implemented inefficiently with some having too many implementing partners who failed to coordinate effectively with each other (Atlantic Council 2023, 7). An example was USAID's the Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote) of 2015 (Atlantic Council 2023, 7). It aimed to promote the status of 75000 women at different societal levels but faced challenges regarding implementation and sustainability (Atlantic Council 2023, 7). Concerning political participation, the Afghan government was argued to lack true commitment to women's leadership because women were often placed in highly visible positions, symbolizing empowerment but lacking real power (Atlantic Council 2023, 7). A few women were also showcased but there was no widespread women's leadership (Atlantic Council 2023, 8). There was also a failure to uphold legal and international commitments supporting women. For example, the first National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security was rarely successfully applied due to cultural resistance and a lack of political will (Atlantic Council 2023, 9). Lastly, Afghan women's lack of access to economic opportunities made it difficult to meaningfully participate in the public sphere (Atlantic Council 2023, 11). Women's status and rights took several steps backwards after the return of the Taliban as discussed above. Some analysts argued that the two decades of investment were a waste of time as women's status and rights were rolled back abruptly (Atlantic Council 2023, 12).

4.2. IRAQ

4.2.1. (2007)

4.2.1.1. Political Status

25% of the 275 seats in parliament were reserved for women under the 2005 constitution (OCHA 2007). The proportion of women was amongst the highest globally (IOM 2018; IPU 2005; OCHA 2007). The female quota was debatable with supporters arguing that because women made up half the population, they deserved more than 25% of the seats (OCHA 2007). Opponents argued that candidates should be chosen based on merit and not because they are women. The share of seats in parliament was 25.5% for females and 74.5% for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was -49.1% (UNDP 2023). Women faced increasing violence and marginalization in negotiations for government positions and initiatives for reconciliation (OCHA 2007). They faced physical violence including assault, assassination, intimidation and threats. The UN, international donors and actors applied insignificant pressure on the government to uphold the bare requirements of the Security Council Resolution 1325 which resulted in disappointment (OCHA 2007). The state apparatus was being utilized by religious groups associated with political parties with representatives in government and parliament to impose increasing sectarian and segregating regulations over state institutions (OCHA 2007). Women were progressively pressured to wear veils, even in government ministries (US. Department of State 2007). There were reports of women's jobs being threatened if they failed to do so (OCHA 2007). In 2007, Iraq scored 0.55 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index showing moderate levels of women's political empowerment (V-Dem 2023).

4.2.1.2. Economic Status

The 2005 constitution of Iraq gave all Iraqi's the right to work (IOM 2019, 5). Yet women were still underrepresented in the job market. The labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) was 12.1% female and 71.5% male, making the gender gap -59.4% (UNDP 2023). This showed large gender disparities in economic participation. They complained that they were exposed to arbitrary dismissal due to absence of an equal opportunity employment statute and weak labour laws (U.S Department of State 2008). The declining security environment disproportionately impacted their ability to work outside the home (U.S Department of State 2008). An environment of fear and worry was created through rape, murder, kidnappings and displacements (ICRC 2007). The Ministry gave women who were heads of single-parent households a minimal stipend but funding

for this need fell short (U.S Department of State 2008). Some women resorted to prostitution as a means of providing for their children. Other women pooled their resources at the local level to try and generate income through projects (Al Ali 2007, 29). USAID had programs which trained women in entrepreneurship, finances, management training and finances (USIP 2006). Additionally, USAID microfinance activities focused on women-owned businesses and trained women in lending (USIP 2006). In 2007, Iraq's GDI value was 0.805 meaning women experienced about 80.5% of men's overall human development (UNDP 2023). The Human Development Index value was 0.517 for females and 0.642 for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was -0.125 showing that women had lower development levels than men (UNDP 2023). The Gross National Income per capita (2017 PPP\$) was \$1,667 for females and \$13,230 for males making the gender gap -\$11,562 (UNDP 2023). There was a significant gender gap in economic opportunities and income between men and women. The World GNI per capita for females was \$9272 for females and \$17,282 for males (UNDP 2023). Both men and women in Iraq earned on average less than the world average.

4.2.1.3. Educational Status

Beyond veiling, calls for gender segregation in university were made by Islamist militias and growing extremist groups (Al Ali 2007, 29). The population with at least some secondary education (ages 25 and older) was 29.1% female and 44.9% male making the gender gap -15.8% (UNDP 2023). Expected years of schooling for females were 9.3 years and 11.7 for males, making the gender gap -2.4 years (UNDP 2023). Girls were still less likely to complete their schooling than boys especially beyond primary level (Amnesty International 2009, 6). This meant they were less likely to reach their full potential in different areas of employment. The mean years of schooling was 5.7 years for females and 7.4 years for males making the gender gap -1.7 years (UNDP 2023). Educational specialists were concerned by the low school attendance of girls because it could create a large educational gap (The New Humanitarian 2007). According to Sinan Zuhair a Minister of Labour and Social Affairs media officer, in addition to the security problem, girls were expected to stay home to help with household chores (The New Humanitarian 2007). Furthermore, religion was used as an excuse to keep girls from attending school. A Ministry of Education spokesperson argued that the ratio of girls attending school to boys was one to four (The New Humanitarian 2007). Things were marginally better in the northern provinces particularly in

towns (The New Humanitarian 2007). In villages, some girls had never attended school or had been pulled out.

4.2.1.4. Healthcare Status

There was a failing health system, lack of clean water and electricity, and malfunctioning sanitation systems after the 2003 invasion (Al Ali 2007, 29). The combination of a series of wars and sanctions resulted in extensive damage of Iraq's infrastructure (OCHA 2007). The primary cause of young children's malnourishment, dysentery and deaths was poor sanitation (Al Ali 2007, 29). A deterioration in health conditions including malnutrition, a rise in mortality rates for children under five and vaccine preventable diseases was caused by the invasion and occupation (Al Ali 2007, 29). Women suffered as they were frequently the last to eat after ensuring their children and husbands ate first as under the humanitarian crisis during the sanctions period (Al Ali 2007, 29). They also had to helplessly watch as their malnourished and frequently ill children went without proper medical attention (Al Ali 2007, 29). Concerns were raised by women's NGOs such as Women's Rights Association over extremists targeting male gynaecologists accusing them of violating women's privacy (U.S Department of State 2007). Women tried to lead in addressing these challenging living conditions and humanitarian crises. For example, some local women's groups and initiatives focused on improving the inadequate health care (Al Ali 2007, 29). The life expectancy at birth was 69.4 years for females and 58.2 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 11.2 years which was how long women were expected to live longer than men (UNDP 2023). The maternal mortality ratio of 138.0 deaths/100000 live births was high as was the adolescent birth rate 78.0 births/1000 women aged 15-19 (UNDP 2023). It reflected a lack of access to contraceptives, and early marriages. The fertility rate total (births per woman) was also considered high at 4.4 in 2007 (UIS 2023).

4.2.1.5. Security

According to the Women's Refugee Commission (2008) armed groups and civilians targeted Iraqi women and girls for kidnapping and murder and subjected them to abuse including rape. Honour killings increased after the invasion but were often concealed and reported as accidents (Fischer-Tahir 2010, 1392). Women were abused by their fathers, brothers and other relatives particularly for trying to decide how they should live (Amnesty International 2007, 29). The U.S State Department believed that an unknown number Iraqi girls and women were trafficked internationally and domestically for sexual exploitation (WRC 2008, 1). Women were also

subjected to strict dress codes, gender segregation and limited movement (Al Ali 2007, 29). Additionally, occupation forces were involved in violence against women not only through killing them but also through physical assaults during house searches and at checkpoints (Al Ali 2007, 29). To coerce suspected insurgents into surrendering, U.S forces held hostage the wives, daughters and sisters of these individuals (Al Ali 2007, 29). There was evidence of them being subjected to torture, physical assault and rape (Al Ali 2007, 29). Acts of violence against women were underreported. This was due to fear of retaliation and incidents not being systematically recorded (Amnesty International 2009, 3).

4.2.2. (2012)

4.2.2.1. Political Status

Despite their involvement in political life, women were ineffective in government or political decision making (U.S Department of State 2012, 33). The share of seats in parliament was 25.2% female and 74.8% male (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was -49.5% (IPU; UNDP 2023). The quota failed to translate into meaningful political participation for women. Some argued that female MPs merely signed off on the decisions of their male party leaders (Reuters 2013). They did not use their platform to address important concerns (UN Women 2018, 21). Sectarian divides and increased conservatism also made women's cooperation across the political spectrum difficult (Reuters 2013). Women were denied important seats on parliamentary committees like reconciliation, and security and defence (UN Women 2018). Conditions were argued to be better in the Kurdish north which was an autonomous region (Reuters 2013). It managed to protect itself from the violent instability felt by the rest of Iraq (Reuters 2013). In 2011 their region's government passed a law criminalizing honour killings, female genital mutilation and domestic violence (Human Rights Watch 2012). Iraq had a score of 0.54 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index. Women's political empowerment was at a moderate level (V-Dem 2023).

4.2.2.2. Economic Status

Iraqi women suffered economic marginalization and low labour force participation. The labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) was 11.7% for females and 70.3% for males in 2012 (UNDP 2023). The gender gap -58.6% (UNDP 2023). Women faced economic discrimination relating to employment, occupation, credit, and equal compensation for equal work or management of similar businesses (U.S Department of State 2012, 43). Women's capacity to work beyond the home was disproportionately impacted by the security situation businesses (U.S Department of

State 2012, 43). They were also vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal because of weak labour laws (Oxfam 2018). According to the 2005 constitution, some laws and how they were interpreted limited women from working in some sectors which required dangerous work, working at night or hard labour (Oxfam 2018, 26). There were few and unsystematic government efforts made to address economic discrimination against women businesses (U.S Department of State 2012, 43). There was a widow stipend but lengthy processing times, confusing bureaucratic procedures, illiteracy among female heads of households and widows made accessing it difficult (U.S Department of State 2012, 43). There were over a million widows in Iraq according to the Iraqi Women's Affairs Ministry (2012). Although it appeared that the younger generation were beginning to view Afghan women differently, Iraqi society still viewed women in their traditional roles as child carers and housekeepers (Oxfam 2018, 26). Iraq's GDI value was 0.802 which was relatively high (UNDP 2023). The HDI value was 0.564 for females and 0.703 for males making the gender gap -0.139 (UNDP 2023). Men therefore had better outcomes and opportunities than women. The Gross National Income per capita (2017 PPP\$) was \$2,315 for females and \$17,462 for males making the gender gap -\$15,147 (UNDP 2023). This means that women earned significantly less income than men on average. The World GNI per capita was \$10,260 for females and \$18,400 for males (UNDP 2023). Therefore, compared to the global GNI, Iraqi women were still at a disadvantage regarding average income earned. The GII value was 0.569 indicates a moderate level of inequality with substantial differences between women and men (UNDP 2023).

4.2.2.3. Educational Status

There were some improvements made in the Iraqi education system. Some schools underwent rehabilitation (WHO 2013, 5). More alternatives were also provided for thousands of out of school children and adolescents (WHO 2013, 5). A program of health promoting schools was put in place as health literacy is an important part of life skills and schools are important in developing such skills (WHO 2013,5). According to the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit (2012) 24% of Iraqi women were illiterate compared to 11% of men. In rural areas illiteracy among women between the ages of 15 and 24 rose to over 50% when asked to read a sentence aloud (functional literacy tests) (IAU 2012, 1). One in three girls between 12 and 14 were not enrolled in school (IAU 2012, 1). Traditionally held societal and cultural beliefs remained impediments to girls' education access. Parental disapproval and family concerns remained the main causes of non-enrolment (IAU 2012, 1). Early marriages were also still prevalent. Women's lack of education

contributed to their oppression (Selimovic 2012, 9). Education is important in addressing issues such as poverty and underdevelopment. For children who are citizens, primary education was compulsory (IAU 2012, 1). In 2012, equal access to education was still a challenge for girls particularly in rural areas and unsafe places (U.S Department of State 2012, 44). The expected years of schooling for females was 10.3 years and 12.0 for males, making the gender gap-1.8 years (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling was 6.8 years for females and 8.1 years for males, making the gender gap -1.3 years (UNDP 2023). Additionally, the population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) was 35.2% female and 48.3% male making the gender gap -13.1% (UNDP 2023). Thus, women completed less years of schooling than men.

4.2.2.4. Healthcare Status

A shortage of medical personnel and supplies and a lack of maintenance resulted in the deterioration of primary healthcare facilities (OXFAM 2018 ,47). There were some improvements in reproductive health after the intervention. While fertility rates slightly declined, early marriage was still prevalent in some parts of Iraq (WHO 2013, 10). Fertility rates were still high (OXFAM 2018, 47). The fertility rate total (births per woman) was 4.5 in 2012 (UIS 2023). There was a significant need for contraception which was unmet (WHO 2013, 10). Few primary healthcare facilities provided family planning services (WHO 2013, 10). They could only be obtained through expensive pharmaceuticals. The rate of women who had a first visit to antenatal care facilities was high (WHO 2013, 10). However, most women did not follow the recommended number of visits (four and above) (WHO 2013, 10). The percentage of births attended by qualified professionals rose from 72% in 2000 to 90.9% in 2012 (OXFAM 2018, 47). More work needed to be done, particularly in the rural areas where 78% of births were attended to by professionals (OXFAM 2018, 47). There was an unsafe water supply and unsanitary conditions. The life expectancy for women was high 70.5 years and 65.4 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 5.1 years which was how long women were expected to live longer than men (UNDP 2023). Women struggled to live healthy lives despite almost reaching the global life expectancy rate of 72.8 years (OXFAM 2018, 47). The maternal mortality ratio of 66.0 deaths/100000 live births was relatively low (UNDP 2023). Iraq's adolescent birth rate was however high at 85.9 births/1000 women aged between 15-19 (UNDP 2023).

4.2.2.5. Security

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remained a significant problem. Female civil servants, journalists, politicians and women's rights activists continued to be threatened by extremists (HRW 2012). Women were vulnerable to forced exploitation and sex trafficking because of financial difficulties, displacement, insecurity and a breakdown of the rule of law (HRW 2012). They were also exposed to forced marriages which subjected them to involuntary servitude usually as a means of paying debt (U.S Department of State 2012). Women who fled such marriages were at risk of being coerced into further sexual servitude or forced labour (U.S Department of State 2012). Domestic abuse and honour killings also continued. Concerning rape, social conventions and reprisals against the offender and victim prevented victims from seeking legal solutions in most cases (U.S Department of State 2012, 40). At times the families of rape victims demanded that the victim be married to the perpetrator to protect their honour (U.S Department of State 2012, 40). Domestic abuse was often dealt with in the tribal and family structures. There was lack of trained police and judicial personnel along with harassment of legal personnel working on cases of domestic violence (U.S Department of State 2012, 40).

4.2.2.6. Policy

U.S funding for Iraqi reconstruction was approximately \$21 billion in 2004 (CRS 2006). A significant portion of this amount was allocated towards women's initiatives in areas such as democratic organization, advocacy, education and entrepreneurship (CRS 2006). Yet, U.S sponsored initiatives aimed at women faced challenges. While some of the humanitarian and reconstruction programs helped women, some aspects of Iraqi culture and society undervalued the importance of women in areas like private industry and political participation (CRS 2006, 15). USAID implemented different programs for women in governance (CRS 2006, 15). Some of these were run under the Iraq Local Governance Program which aimed to lay the groundwork for Iraq's transition to democracy (CRS 2006, 15). The LPG tried to solve challenges caused by Iraqi culture to women in governance (CRS 2006, 15). It also funded and supported local women's groups initiatives to create their own civil society organizations, NGOs and professional associations (CRS 2006, 15). Accelerated learning programs focused on girls were also supported by USAID. These initiatives aimed to give girls academic skills and life preparation for formal school (CRS 2006, 15). In 2004, USAID had trained more than 32000 teachers and education administration workers, and rehabilitated 2351 schools (CRS 2006, 15).

According to the U.S Institute of Peace (2012) the women's rights movement in Iraq had stalled in 2012. Quotas safeguarding women's political participation were at risk of being removed (Kuehnast 2012, 4). Some of the shortcomings concerning the policy implemented by the U.S and her allies included a lack of depth in certain programs, a lack of coordination amongst international donors and between international and local partners, absence of efficient monitoring and evaluation procedures and failure of some donors to consider advice from local partners (USIP 2012, 4). For instance, funds allocated to vocational training may have been better used to position women to contribute significantly to the transition process in different ways such as leadership capacity building, coalition building along with higher education at graduate school (USIP 2012, 4). The short term was often prioritized by international donors which at times resulted in a lack of faith in local partners, a result driven approach and prescriptive mindsets (USIP 2012, 4). Not much was done to engage men in improving women's status. Despite women focused empowerment programs being important, evidence showed that women could progress more quickly when supported by their male counterparts. Thus, involving men was crucial (Kuehnast 2012, 4). Lastly, international donors often limited their outreach to English speakers and urban based civil society organizations but were slow to reach beyond urban elite partners (Kuehnast 2012, 4).

4.3. LIBYA

4.3.1. (2011)

4.3.1.1. Political Status

The part played by women in the 2011 revolution sparked a change in opinion concerning the potential benefits of women's participation in politics (Doherty 2012, 3). They performed tasks such as smuggling arms and ammunition, tending to wounded fighters in clinics and hospitals, providing meals for soldiers and reporting on human rights violations (Doherty 2012, 2). Their involvement in the uprising gave them a feeling of empowerment regarding the future of Libya and it enabled them to defend their rights (Doherty 2012, 3). Furthermore, they planned to maximize on this and guarantee women's continued opportunities in advancing Libya. Women started seeking opportunities to organize around shared concerns (Doherty 2012, 3). Libya's first national women's conference was held in November 2011 by Attawasul and the Voice of Libyan Women, two well-known women's groups (Doherty 2012, 3). Activists from Libya and the diaspora collaborated to draft recommendations for advancing women's rights (Bugagis 2018, 12). Despite the upsurge in women's activism, they still had limited opportunities to participate in politics. Only two women made up the 40-member council of the NTC formed in 2011 until the revolution's end (UNHCR 2014, 12). The share of seats in parliament was 7.7% female and 92.3% male (UNDP 2023). The gender gap -84.6% meaning there was high inequality in political participation between men and women. (UNDP 2023). Libya scored 0.24 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index meaning women's decision-making and political representation was low (V-Dem 2023).

4.3.1.2. Economic Status

Societal discrimination against women continued even though women were promised equal rights before the law under Gaddafi (USIP 2011). It limited women's movements even locally, hindering their capacity to actively participate in the workforce in some rural areas (USIP 2011). According to the UNHCR (2012) the government was the largest employer. Salaries in the civil service were determined by education and experience (UNHCR 2012). Men and women with comparable qualifications were paid at the same grade for similar positions (UNHCR 2012). Even though women typically earned less than men for similar work, the private sector did not formally discriminate based on gender regarding access to credit or employment (UNHCR 2012). The Gross National Income per capita was \$5.635 for females and \$12.700 for males making the gender gap

-\$7,065 in 2011 (UNDP 2023). On average, women continued to earn less than men (UNDP 2023). The World GNI per capita for females was \$10.024 and \$18.061 for males in 2011 meaning both men and women earned less than the global average (UNDP 2023). The labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) was 33.9% for females and 61.2% for males in 2011 (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was -27.3% showing that women had less access to the labour force (UNDP 2023). The revolution impacted women's economic engagement. Women tended to occupy conservative and traditional roles in teaching and healthcare (UNHCR 2012). Due to mass detention, missing people and the war, there were many female headed households (USIP 2011). Many Libyan women started businesses following the civil war to support their families as they had become widows (Bugaighis 2017, 21). Libya's GDI value was 0.973 (UNDP 2023). There was a narrow difference in the HDI's of men and women. HDI value was 0.677 for females and 0.696 for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap -0.019 means that women had slightly lower development levels than men in 2011 (UNDP 2023). Libya had a GII value of 0.289 indicating low inequality between women and men (UNDP 2023).

4.3.1.3. Educational Status

Education was free until the end of primary school in Libya (UNHCR 2012). According to the World Bank (2013) girls attended secondary school at higher rates than boys, while women and men had equal access to education at primary level. The expected years of schooling for females was 13.9 years and 13.5 for males, making the gender gap 0.4 years in 2011 (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling was 7.7 years for females and 7.0 years for males making the gender gap 0.8 years in 2011 (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, the population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) was 58.0% female and 42.5% male making the gender gap 15.6% in 2011 (UNDP 2023). More women were expected to and completed more years of schooling than men. For thousands of children nationwide, the conflict disrupted the school year. While classes continued in some areas such as Tripoli, schools in other areas remained closed (UNHCR 2012). In September and October some schools partially reopened yet due to lack of supplies, building damage and safety concerns others remained closed (UNHCR 2012). Progress in women's access to education did not lead to corresponding progress in the overall status of women's employment (Tamtam and Naher 2011, 743). In 2011/2012 341,841 people were going on to tertiary education of which 59% were female and 41% were male (Carter 2018, 6). The literacy rate amongst the youth aged between 15 and 25 was 100% (UNESCO 2011, 274). Still, the quality of education

was of concern. The shortcomings included high repetition rates, subpar learning outcomes, and significant disparities among districts in learning outcomes (UNHCR 2012). Furthermore, a lack of integrated investment planning and administration resulted in uncontrolled staff hiring (UNHCR 2012).

4.3.1.4. Healthcare Status

According to the UNHCR (2012) individuals and couples had the right to choose the number, timing and spacing of their children. They had the means and information to do so without coercion, discrimination and violence (UNHCR 2012). Many foreign medical professionals fled Libya because of the conflict, and this resulted in a reduction of available skilled personnel which likely impacted women's access to adequate treatment during childbirth (UNHCR 2012). There was a lack of medicine for pregnant women and their children (Daw 2017, 48). However, Libya had a low maternal mortality ratio of 56.0 deaths/100000 live births (UNDP 2023). The adolescent birth rate was low at 6.6 births/1000 women aged 15-19 (UNDP 2023). Furthermore, the fertility rate total (births per woman) was moderate at 2.6 in 2011 (UIS 2023). An increase in patients, miscarriages and preterm deliveries was witnessed at Al-Jamahiriya hospital in Benghazi since the violence began on February 17 (Bodalal 2011, 178). The hospital dealt with 450 miscarriages from February to mid to late April (MHTF 2011). There was also reduced access to food, water and hygiene. Mental health conditions like anxiety, stress and post-traumatic stress disorder became more common as the war continued (Daw 2017, 48). Life expectancy at birth was 73.9 years for females and 66.8 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 7.0 years with women expected to live longer than men (UNDP 2023).

4.3.1.5. Security

Domestic violence and rape continued to be areas of concern. The topic of rape was barely spoken of in public (UNHCR 2012). Victims were frequently blamed for their abusers' actions when gender-based violence occurred outside the home. Rape was considered a disgrace to the entire family (UNHCR 2012). Some victims of rape experienced abandonment from their families. During the protests, there were allegations of rape made against pro-Gaddafi forces (Reuters 2011). There were around 8000 cases of rape during the war (Reuters 2011). The number could have been higher due to unreported cases (UNHCR 2012). Rape was used as a weapon during the war. Domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence worsened following the end of the conflict in October 2011 because of a lack of accountability for such violence and a decline in law

and order (UNHCR 2012) Women who had supposedly damaged their families' reputations including divorcees and rape victims could be forced to stay at social rehabilitation facilities (Freedom House 2013). Women at these facilities were forced to take invasive virginity tests and were ill-treated (UNHCR 2012).

4.3.2. (2012)

4.3.2.1. Political Status

Libya held its first elections of the post Gaddafi era on July 7, 2012. 647 women ran for office and 687000 women voted (Doherty 2012, 1). Women also played different roles as poll workers, domestic election observers and campaign volunteers. 33 women won in the July elections (U.S Department of State 2012, 19). They comprised 16.5% of the 200-member General National Congress, Libya's interim legislative authority (Doherty 2012, 1). It indicated a notable rise in women's political participation. Despite harassment and intimidation, female candidates persevered during their campaigns (Doherty 2012, 1). They faced new challenges such as persistent opposition to women's participation from men and some women, significant capacity issues, backsliding and increased public scrutiny (Doherty 2012, 1). Out of 33 ministers to the cabinet, two women were named as the ministers of social affairs and tourism by the newly appointed prime minister (HRW 2013, 14). To guarantee that women were elected, the election law had a gender parity clause mandating each party to place female candidates in an alternating pattern with male ones on their lists (HRW 2013). The share of seats in parliament was 16.5% female and 83.5% male (UNDP 2023). The gender gap -67.0%. Libya scored 0.46 on the Women's Political Empowerment Index indicating that women's participation and influence were not yet fully realized but were at a moderate level (V-Dem 2023).

4.3.2.2. Economic Status

The labour force comprised of 34% women (World Bank 2015, 5). The labour force participation rate in Libya showed wide gender disparities. 97% of all working women and 79% of working men were employed in the public sector (World Bank 2015,10). By law, employers had to pay men and women the same amount if the conditions and type of work were the same (U.S Department of State 2012, 27). In the public sector, women with secondary education tended to earn three times more than those in the private sector (World Bank 2015, 16). Regarding the public sector, female university graduates tended to earn 18% less than their male counterparts (World Bank 2015, 17). Women who completed secondary education earned 30% less than men in the private sector and

in the public sector they earned 10% less (World Bank 2015,17). Women might have been more prevalent in lower grade positions than higher grade ones (World Bank 2015, 17). Compared to men, females had a higher unemployment rate of 25% as opposed to 16% (World Bank 2015, 18). The gender dynamics in the labour market in Libya may have been caused by lower labour mobility among females, preference for working in the public sector which offered non-wage benefits like maternity leave amongst other factors (World Bank 2015 ,18). Libya's GDI value in 2012 was 0.969 indicating that women had a similar degree of development to men on average (UNDP 2023). The HDI value was 0.711 for females and 0.734 for males indicating that men had slightly higher outcomes in human development than women in 2012 (UNDP 2023). The Gross National Income per capita in 2012 was \$10,227 for females and \$22,885 for males making the gender gap -\$12,658 (UNDP 2023). On average men continued to earn more than women. The World GNI per capita in 2012 was \$10.260 for females and \$18.400 for males, making the gender gap -\$8.141 (UNDP 2023). Libyan women earned less than the global average while Libyan men earned more. Libya had a GII of 0.243 indicating low inequality between men and women in the labour market, health and education (UNDP 2023). The labour force participation rate (age 15 and older) was 33.9% female and 61.2% male. making the gender gap -27.3% (UNDP 2023). This indicated significant disparities in employment possibilities and engagement rates between men and women.

4.3.2.3. Educational Status

The conflict in Libya had a significant impact on the education of girls and boys. Some of the education infrastructure was damaged during the crisis and affected the education system's delivery (Carter 2018). Between 2011 and mid 2013 almost 2000 schools were reported as damaged or destroyed (Carter 2018, 6). Girls were especially vulnerable to insecurity and violence. According to the Libyan Ministry of Education assessment (2012) there were 1, 246, 121 pupils enrolled of which 49% were girls and 51% were boys. Still, as noted earlier, the quality of education continued to be of concern (Carter 2018, 5). This varied between different regions as did the inclusivity and relevance of education (Carter 2018, 6). For instance, poorer and rural areas were typically underserved regarding availability of resources, teacher-student ratios and classroom sizes (Carter 2018, 6). The expected years of schooling for females was 13.6 years and 13.2 years for males, making the gender gap 0.4 years (UNDP 2023). The mean years of schooling were 7.7 years for females and 7.0 years for males making the gender gap 0.8 years (UNDP 2023). Women's expected and average years of schooling were slightly higher than men's. The population with at least some secondary education (age 25 and older) was 60.6% female and 43.0% male making the gender gap 17.5% (UNDP 2023). Hence, more women than men had some secondary level education.

4.3.2.4. Healthcare Status

Libya's healthcare system faced many challenges in 2012, particularly regarding women's access to care (Oakley 2013, 1). A lack of medical services resulted from the health system's collapse during and after the revolution. Major disruptions to communication, transportation and patient information were seen particularly in primary and emergency services (Bodalal 2014,179). Due to the conflict, there was a significant loss of doctors, midwives and nurses (Bodalal 2014,179). Most Libyan women understood the importance of antenatal care and were attended by a female doctor (Ibrahim 2014, 124). They felt uncomfortable being examined by a male doctor given that doing so was a concern to their modesty (Ibrahim 2014, 124). Women were also required to be accompanied by someone when they went to the doctor. The life expectancy at birth was 75.1 years for females and 69.8 years for males (UNDP 2023). The gender gap was 5.3 reflecting how long women were expected to live longer than men (UNDP 2023). Libya had a low maternal mortality ratio of 55.0 deaths/100000 live births (UNDP 2023). The adolescent birth rate was also low at 7.0

births/1000 women aged 15-19 (UNDP 2023). The fertility rate total (births per woman) was 2.7 in 2012 which was moderate (UIS 2023).

4.3.2.5. Security

Extremists and militias utilized intimidation and violence against women they believed to have violated cultural norms and religious laws (U.S Department of State 2012, 21). While spousal rape was not addressed by the law, rape was criminalized (U.S Department of State 2012, 21). Rape victims were no longer coerced into marrying their rapists as a means of escaping legal proceedings according to local NGOs (U.S Department of State 2012, 21). There was a rise in sexual harassment in Tripoli and other large cities as the country became increasingly unsafe due to lawlessness (UN UPR 2014, 5). Given the social stigma associated with rape in Libya's traditional society, it was difficult to know the number of cases (UN UPR 2014, 5). Under Libya's penal code, sexual violence was classified as "a crime against a woman's honour instead of a woman or a crime against her bodily integrity (UN UPR 2014, 5). Reporting of crimes by sexual assault victims was discouraged under Law no.70 which dealt with fornication and adultery (UN UPR 2014, 5).

4.3.2.6. Policy

The Libya Women Economic Empowerment Program by USAID aimed to release the untapped economic potential of women's entrepreneurship and contribute to Libya's political and economic stability (USAID 2016). It also aimed to identify the barriers preventing women from fully participating in the Libyan formal economy and offered creative solutions to them. \$2,892,208 was allocated to this program (USAID 2016). The program strengthened business associations, particularly those aimed at women to establish long term platforms for advocacy and business engagement (USAID 2016). It also gave women leadership training and highlighted women in business and leadership roles (USAID 2016). Furthermore, it created a financial portal for small to medium businesses to access finance services (USAID 2016). One of its achievements in the first phase between 2012-2014 was training 200 female entrepreneurs with the fundamental skills of business (USAID 2016). Another was giving eight women matching grants to boost their capital at a nationwide business plan competition and mentoring (USAID 2016). Lastly, building the capacity of local partners that offered services to businesses particularly those that aided in implementing the program and businesses owned by women in the private sector (USAID 2016).

Activities that empowered Libyan women to be vocal and participate in decision-making and enhance their ability to create change in the nation were implemented through the Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID 2017). The female led Mafqood centre which provided legal and social services to families of those who disappeared during the revolution, benefited from training in advocacy and computer skills by USAID (USAID 2017). USAID also partnered with the Tiwatriwin Association to create an internet centre and offer computer training to women in Yefren, a remote area of marginalized communities (USAID 2017). The centre provided women a safe environment to access information and connect with people about important issues (USAID 2017). Women were taught how to run political campaigns and dialogues to support women's participation in the drafting of the new Libyan constitution (USAID 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

Multinational military intervention and its impact on the status of local women is a complex and critical issue that deserves analysis. The study focuses on women because they are often disproportionately affected by violent conflict, which worsens existing gender disparities and discrimination. The research has analysed different dimensions of women's status including their political, economic, educational, healthcare and security status in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya before and after the multinational military interventions. The before and after case study method was used in the analysis. This method compares observations made before and after the implementation of an intervention. The research analyses women's status in the two years before the interventions, the period during and one year after the interventions to assess their impact on women's status. Different indices were used in the research, including the United Nations Development Program's Gender Development Index, the Gender Inequality Index and the Women's Political Empowerment Index. Comparing these three cases provides insights into the different effects of military intervention on women's status and well-being. Military intervention can have both positive and negative effects on local women. The research finds that multinational military intervention had mixed effects on women's status during the occupations and diminished women's status after the withdrawal of troops. The research contributes to the work done on the impact military interventions by focusing on women's status in target states.

POLITICAL STATUS

Afghanistan

Before the intervention women were excluded from political life and had no political rights. However, their political status improved during the occupation. The introduction of the 2004 constitution allowed women to vote and run for office, marking a positive shift in their political participation. Additionally, a quota system was introduced to ensure women's representation in parliament. However, women's increased representation did not translate to true decision-making power as they faced violence, intimidation and death. With the withdrawal of troops and return of the Taliban women's political rights and status were rolled back leading to restrictions on their participation and mobility in the public sphere.

Iraq

Before the intervention, women in Iraq had little influence on decision-making processes in the government, civil service and judiciary. Women's organizations were prohibited. During the occupation the proportion of women in parliament improved. However, women faced increasing violence and marginalization in negotiations for government positions and initiatives for reconciliation. Issues such as limited decision-making power and societal pressures persisted, impacting women's ability to fully engage in political processes. After withdrawal, despite their involvement in political life, women were ineffective in government or political decision making. The quota failed to translate into meaningful political participation for women. Women were denied important seats on parliamentary committees like reconciliation, security, and defense. Hence their political status had improved during the occupation but declined after withdrawal.

Libya

Women had severely limited political and civil rights and participation. They played a marginal role in the country's institutions. Freedom of expression was also limited. Individuals could be imprisoned for criticizing Gaddafi or the political system. However, women had a slightly higher degree of liberty to discuss issues related to women's rights and domestic violence. During the occupation, there was an upsurge in women's activism, but they still had limited opportunities to participate in politics. After the withdrawal, women played different roles as poll workers, domestic election observers and campaign volunteers. The newly appointed prime minister named two women as social affairs and tourism ministers. Thus, there were some improvements in women's status during the occupation and immediately after withdrawal, but women's status remained low. Challenges such as limited opportunities to participate in politics and societal pressures continued to impact women's political status.

ECONOMIC STATUS

Afghanistan

Women's economic status was low prior to the intervention. Their economic participation was limited. They could work in the health sector as doctors and nurses but could only treat other women. During the occupation efforts were made to improve women's access to jobs through different initiatives. However, their participation was still largely limited to the informal sector. Access to paid and formal employment was higher in cities. Still, those who worked as public

servants, teachers and doctors were in the minority and received less pay than men. They also encountered challenges such as sexual harassment, lack of transport and daycare facilities. After the withdrawal, restrictions were imposed on women's participation and mobility in the public sphere. Female civil servants had to work at home and most female journalists lost their jobs. Women continued to work in positions such as health security and education. However, their economic rights and status backtracked.

Iraq

Women and girls were disproportionately affected by the economic consequences of U.N sanctions (1990-2003) imposed on Iraq after the Gulf war. There was a lack of access to employment. Their monthly earnings in the public sector also declined. Many women could not work anymore as free transport and childcare services were halted. There were many female-headed households as men went abroad to work. During the occupation, the 2005 constitution of Iraq gave all Iraqi's the right to work. Yet women were still underrepresented in the job market and the declining security environment contributed to this. Some policy initiatives were implemented to try improving their status. After withdrawal, Iraqi women suffered economic marginalization and low labour force participation and were vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal because of weak labour laws. Hence, they continued to have low economic status.

Libya

More women than men were in university and the Libyan workforce than in most Arab states before the intervention. Women successfully entered male dominated fields including medicine, business and law. Yet, women were still underrepresented in the workforce. Women and men could choose the work they found suitable. They were encouraged to work in the military and had special female police forces, bodyguards and military academies. These jobs were however considered shameful due to cultural beliefs. Despite the states' position on women's employment, welcoming diversity regarding women's career choices, they continued to mainly work in fields like education, secretarial and cleaning work and health services. They were also paid less than men. Men and women opposed the notion of women holding authority over men. Senior positions were usually awarded to men, even in traditionally female jobs. During the occupation, women's movements

were limited. This impeded their capacity to participate in the workforce in some rural areas. They also earned less than men. The revolution impacted women's economic engagement. There were many female-headed households because of mass detention, missing people and the war. After the withdrawal, they continued to earn less and have less access to employment compared to men.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Afghanistan

Women also had low educational status before the intervention. Girls over eight were banned from attending school. They could only receive instruction from mosques, where segregation was required. Secondary and tertiary education was banned for women. During the occupation, girls could attend schools and women were permitted to attend university. School was compulsory until the 9th grade and was funded until university level. Their literacy and enrolment rates also improved. However, they faced challenges like poverty, discriminatory cultural practices, a lack of female schools, forced early marriage and insecurity. The Taliban controlled girl's curriculum in low enrolment areas. Rural areas had less gains compared to urban areas. The withdrawal of troops resulted in girls and women being banned from attending secondary and tertiary school. This resulted in their educational status backtracking.

Iraq

Before the intervention, families were unable to send their children to school leading to a sharp increase in the gender gap in school enrolment and ultimately in female illiteracy. Women had less access to education compared to men. During occupation, there were calls for gender segregation and veiling in university by Islamist militias and growing extremist groups. Girls were still less likely to complete their schooling than boys especially beyond primary level. Religion was used as an excuse to keep girls from attending school. Post withdrawal, there were some improvements made in the Iraqi education system. Some schools underwent rehabilitation. Alternatives were provided for thousands of out of school children and adolescents. Iraqi women were more illiterate than Iraqi men. Societal and cultural beliefs remained impediments to girl's access to education. For children who were citizens, primary education was compulsory. Equal access to education was

still a challenge for girls particularly in rural areas and unsafe places. Thus, while there were some improvements made after withdrawal, women's educational status was still low.

Libya

Education was compulsory for children ages 6 to 15 before the intervention. Female students tended to perform better than male students. Women were allowed to enter all study fields. Hence, women were expected to and completed more years of schooling than men. Universities and schools were not separated by gender. Libya met the Millenium Development Goals for education before 2011. However, what was a concern was the quality of education. During the occupation, education was free until the end of primary school. Girls attended secondary school at higher rates than boys and had equal access to education at primary level. More women were expected to and completed more years of schooling than men. There was a 100% literacy rate among the youth. Still, the quality of education was of concern. After withdrawal, the conflict in Libya significantly impacted on the education of girls and boys. Some of the education infrastructure was damaged. This affected the education system's delivery. Poorer and rural areas were typically underserved regarding resources, teacher-student ratios and classroom sizes. Women's expected and average years of schooling were slightly higher than men's. Thus, there was no significant improvement in women's educational status.

HEALTHCARE STATUS

Afghanistan

Health facilities were off limits for many women before the intervention as unaccompanied women were not permitted in hospitals. The Taliban's return prior to the intervention increased the threat to women's security both physically and sexually. Restrictions imposed on women concerning segregation of transportation, movement and dress code all made it difficult for women to access medical care. Female doctors were forbidden to work. Male doctors were forbidden from treating women unless they were fully dressed in a burqa. One maternity hospital existed in Afghanistan. During the occupation, women had increased access to healthcare services and involvement in the health sector. However, there was a shortage of healthcare professionals in rural areas. As aid declined with the U.S decision to withdraw in 2010, so did the healthcare system. Improvements slowed down between 2011 and 2016. After withdrawal, aid was frozen and negatively impacted

on the running of health services and care for women and girls. The challenges women faced in obtaining healthcare included insecurity, long distances, mobility restrictions (need for a male relative to escort them), and a lack of trained female personnel. Therefore, women's healthcare status declined during this period.

Iraq

Women had difficulties accessing proper healthcare, particularly reproductive health. Additionally, they suffered from malnutrition, anaemia and other diseases. The sanctions also impacted staff availability in health facilities, medicine and equipment. During the occupation, there was a failing health system, lack of clean water and electricity, and malfunctioning sanitation systems. Women suffered as they were frequently the last to eat after ensuring their children and husbands ate first. Some extremists targeted male gynaecologists arguing they violated women's privacy. However, some local women's groups and initiatives focused on improving the inadequate health care. After withdrawal, a shortage of medical personnel and supplies and a lack of maintenance resulted in the deterioration of primary healthcare facilities. There were some improvements in reproductive health. While fertility rates slightly declined, early marriage was still prevalent in some parts of Iraq. Very few primary healthcare facilities provided family planning services. Therefore, women's healthcare status continued to be low after the intervention.

Libya

Men and women had equal access to healthcare before the intervention, but the quality was considered inadequate. Improvements were made in different areas. The maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rate was low. Emergency care was free for everyone living there. Most women accessed prenatal, postpartum and antenatal care. Libya had the lowest maternal mortality in the region. However, the reproductive health of women was considered a family affair and as such women had limited decision-making power in this area. During the occupation, many foreign medical professionals fled Libya resulting in reduced available skilled personnel which likely impacted women's access to adequate care during childbirth. There was a medicine shortage for pregnant women and their children. After withdrawal, Libya's healthcare system faced many challenges in 2012, particularly relating to women's access to care. Due to the conflict, there was a significant loss of doctors, midwives and nurses. Women were also required to be accompanied

by someone when they went to the doctor. Thus, their healthcare status declined after the withdrawal.

SECURITY STATUS

Afghanistan

Women faced physical abuse during the period before intervention from the Taliban's religious police. They were punished for being without a male relative, laughing too loudly, allowing their ankles to show and for wearing the wrong kind of burqa amongst other reasons. Women who were raped had to provide normal evidentiary requirements along with the testimony of four witnesses. Rape victims risked being flogged for adultery or fornication if they failed to prove that they were raped. During occupation most women in urban and rural areas faced family violence and continued to be the targets of physical assaults and harsh punishments mandated by local religious councils. Rape also continued to be a problem. Trafficking became a growing concern. Defying of gender norms resulted in killings, particularly shootings of prominent women including media and politicians. After the withdrawal, women's access to comprehensive and quality access to services for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) survivors deteriorated. Their safety therefore declined in this period.

Iraq

Economic hardships forced many women into prostitution before the intervention. As such, honour killings increased during this time due to cultural beliefs against this. The government condemned prostitution and engaged in violent campaigns to end it. Many honour killings were covered up as accidents. During the occupation, armed groups and civilians targeted Iraqi women and girls for kidnapping and murder and subjected them to abuse including rape. Honour killings also increased. Occupation forces were involved in violence against women through killing them and physical assaults during house searches and at checkpoints. To coerce suspected insurgents into surrendering, U.S forces held hostage female relatives of these individuals. They were subjected to torture, and rape. After the withdrawal, violence against women and girls (VAWG) remained a significant problem. Women were vulnerable to forced exploitation and sex trafficking because of insecurity, financial difficulties, displacement, breakdown of the rule of law. Honour killings, rape

and domestic abuse also continued. Thus, women's security status continued to be low after this period.

Libya

The issue of domestic violence in Libya was troublesome. Spousal rape was not considered a crime. Additionally, only the most horrible of rapists were prosecuted. Rapists were expected to marry their victims. This was seen as a solution to 'save' her honour. Although consent was needed from the victim, due to pressure from society, women were often forced into agreeing to such marriages. During the occupation, domestic violence and rape continued to be troublesome. Victims were blamed for their abusers' actions when gender-based violence occurred outside the home. During the protests, there were allegations of rape made against pro-Gaddafi forces. After withdrawal, extremists and militias utilized intimidation and violence against women they believed to have violated cultural norms and religious laws. While the law did not address spousal rape, rape was criminalized. Rape victims were no longer coerced into marrying their rapists as a means of escaping legal proceedings according to local NGOs. Hence, women's security was still low.

5.1. The research question and recommendations

It is important to note that conditions were better for women in urban areas compared to rural ones in the three case studies. Therefore, it can be argued that the objective of improving women's status was unmet. Despite some improvements being made, women consistently experience violence and discrimination in the periods before and after the interventions in the three cases. Women also did not have real decision-making power and continued to be marginalized not only within their states but by the international community when they were largely excluded from the transition periods and in the implementation of the Women Peace and Security framework. What was interesting about the findings is that they were not as clear-cut as I had initially anticipated they would be. The impact that multinational military intervention had on women's status was more complex than one would assume, especially during the occupation periods where initiatives and programs were implemented to improve women's status.

Based on the above findings, there was a lack of long-term planning concerning the impact of the interventions and the implementation of different policies to assist women. In Afghanistan, there were significant improvements in women's status during the occupation especially regarding their

political, economic and educational status. However, with the removal of troops, gains concerning women's status were lost. In Iraq, some gains were made concerning women's status, particularly political and economic participation when troops were present. However, the intervention exposed women to increased violence. In Libya, there were some improvements in the political, and economic spheres and women had a slight advantage over men in education. However, their status declined after withdrawal. In future, intervening states should consider the possible prolonged effects of military intervention on women and how these may be mitigated. Sacrificing the rights of women when making exit deals defeats the purpose of having intervened in the first place as was the case in Afghanistan where women lost all the gains they had made over two decades. Understanding the cultural context of the target state is also essential as efforts to improve women's status and democratize may be rejected because it is seen as a form of imperialism or as going against the beliefs of citizens of those countries. This was seen in all three states where women continued to face violence, intimidation and even death when they were perceived as going against religious beliefs. Addressing the core causes of discrimination is therefore essential to the success of intervention and initiatives. A lack of policy coordination between intervening states' implementation also negatively impacted their effectiveness in improving women's status. Therefore, it is important to allow transparency and accountability concerning these projects' funding and ensure that they meet their targets. Intervening states should involve women more in peace processes and security as they can make important contributions in these areas.

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