Gender, citizenship and inequalities

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Resumen

La Plataforma de Acción de Beijing y la CEDAW representa un paso importante en la afirmación de los valores comunes y de una opinión compartida sobre la igualdad de género para todas las sociedades humanas, independientemente de sus tradiciones culturales y religiosas. Sin embargo, las fuertes desigualdades de género persisten en prácticamente todo el mundo, como los cuatro parámetros – el trabajo, la educación, la política y la salud, que se utilizan para el Gender Gap indican. El artículo analiza la cuestión de la igualdad de género frente a la persistencia de las desigualdades sociales y económicas, teniendo en cuenta el punto de vista histórico, y enfocando los problemas actuales. El documento plantea una pregunta crucial: ¿es la persistencia del sexismo, la discriminación, la violencia contra las mujeres, la culminación de las resistencias de las instituciones religiosas y las fuerzas conservadoras, antidemocráticas y autoritarias, o es una consecuencia del actual sistema mundial, formado por la dominante los países occidentales y sus ideologías (ideologías saber mercado centrado) con su aceptación formal de la democracia y de los derechos humanos?

Abstract

The Beijing Platform for Action and the CEDAW represent an important step in the affirmation of common values and of a shared opinion about gender equality for all human societies, regardless of their cultural and religious traditions. However, strong gender inequalities persist practically all over the world, as the four basic parameters -work, education, politics and health, which are used for the measurement of Gender Gap, the gender imbalance- indicate. The paper analyses the issue of gender equality versus persisting social and economic inequalities, taking into account an historical perspective, and focusing present problems. The paper raises a crucial question: is the persistence of sexism, discrimination, violence against women, the culmination of the resistances of religious institutions and conservative forces, undemocratic and authoritarian, or is it a consequence of the present World system, shaped by the dominating Western countries and their ideologies (namely market-centered ideologies) with their formal acceptation of democracy and of human rights?

1. Introduction

During the 1990s, the debate on human rights within the United Nations and other international organizations has opened new perspectives for women's citizenship in an increasingly globalized world (Berkovitch, 1999).

The Second World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993) has argued forcefully that "*the human rights of women and girls are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights*" and that "*the human rights of women should form an integral part of the activities of the United Nations for human rights."* The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and the ECOSOC agreed conclusions (1997/2), have asked the United Nations, Member States, international organizations and NGOs to systematically integrate a gender perspective in all their political actions. The strategy of gender mainstreaming recognizes the need to take into account the social and economic differences between men and women, assessing the implications of every action, program or policy, in order to ensure further steps towards the ultimate goal: the elimination of gender inequalities enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and ratified by several Member States.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the CEDAW represent an important step in the affirmation of common values and of a shared opinion about gender equality for all human societies, regardless of their cultural and religious traditions. With these documents, gender equality has become a key element of human rights and has been established as an essential pillar for the implementation of the aim of "*development*"- as defined by the UN. In fact, according to the United Nations studies, analysis and indicators, policies that promote development, equal opportunities and the participation of women have a positive impact on productivity and economic growth.

However, in front of these declarations and programs, strong inequalities persist for female gender in practically all world societies, as the four basic parameters -work, education, politics and health, which are used for the measurement of Gender Gap, the gender imbalance- indicate. This doesn't concern only poor or developing countries, but also rich countries of the Western world. As far as the social representation is concerned, gender inequality is still present in the majority of the cultures, religions, nations and groups in the world. Catholic and Muslim delegates at the Bejing Congress joined together in opposition to reproductive rights, sexuality and women's health[1]. Political conservatism has also an impact on women's rights. In the United States, where feminist movements have a long history, since the Republican presidency of Ronald Reagan in the early eighties, women's rights have not much advanced: it is even question of "*backlash*"[2] –a sort of counter-attack against women's rights.

Moreover, gender equality is challenged by a recent trend that sees inequalities in class, race and rights grow: after a time when modern societies were fighting inequality, now all indicators show that inequality is growing worldwide (Rodota, 2013). The trend is clear, if even the

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[1] Italy is, unfortunately, a clear example of how gender inequalities persist over the years and how the social representation of the woman in media and mainstream culture is negatively stereotyped (Campani, 2009), in spite of the pressure of international organisations (including the European Union).

[2] The concept of "*backlash*" was introduced by Susan Faludi in 1991 with "*Backlash: The Undeclared War on American Women.*" Backlash (counterattack) is the title of a 1947 Hollywod movie in which a husband is accusing the wife of a murder that he has committed. Similarly, Faludi writes, the speech of the backlash accuses feminismo of all evil, when in fact it is precisely the instigators of the backlash that cause the deterioration of the status of women, cutting welfare, fighting against equal pay, blocking funding for the 'assistance to children and kindergartens. Faludi explains that the backlash is not a coordinated movement, much less a conspiracy run by some small secret group who pulls the strings. It is, however, a "mix" of representations, ideas, doctrines, pseudo-scientific (psychological, sociological or demographic) values. Moreover, the mix is seemingly contradictory: the backlash is "*at the same time sophisticated and banal, falsely modernizer and proudly backward. Use the results of an alleged "scientific research" and the moralism of yesterday ...* ". (p. xviii). What holds it together is the desire to limit the freedom of women.

President of the United States Barack Obama has recently denounced that inequalities in the rights, in the respect of the race and in income are putting in danger social cohesion and democracy. It is in fact estimated that in the USA 10% of the population owns between 50% and 85% of the national wealth, while in 1980, this same 10% possessed the 35% (Rodota, 2013). European data are similar. Various factors produce growing inequality: the economic crisis, the austerity approach that reduces resources for the welfare, the high unemployment…In fact, behind all these phenomena, there is the affirmation of the market as a natural law whose rules are the competition and the indifference to the universalism of the rights.

The question is then: how can gender equality, aimed by the Bejing Platform, be implemented, when social, economic and even racial inequalities are growing? In a time when the awareness on gender equality as basic human right is spreading, the production of inequalities challenges women's movements as two hundred years ago...

2. Women's rights, universal rights

The paper starts the idea that the challenges women's movements face today, in a world of growing inequalities, have been there since the beginning of the feminist battle. It analyses the complex issue of gender/equality/inequality both in the historical perspective and in the present context, in order to find some instruments of understanding of the present difficulties: divisions in women's movements; claims for formal equalities (i.e. the "*pink*" quota in political representation), while the rights of the workers (both male and female) are vanishing; development of anti-feminist and conservative women's movements; debate about multiculturalism and women's rights developed by some feminists, as Moller Okin (2007), questioning the position of minorities…These are just some of the issues women's movements face.

Since the Eighteenth century, the issue of equality between men and women was intermingled with the fight for overcoming other inequalities –as the abolition of the slavery for blacks and the class conflict. Moreover, since the Nineteenth century, the national battles –with their promises of equality (and citizenship) *at least for* or *just for the nation members*- citizenship is still today bound to a precise nationality- have seduced many women who were at the same time engaged in the feminist battle –both in the Western and non-Western world (namely in the decolonization fight). National battles may have represented new rights for the women, but they may have also induced the sacrifice of women's rights in the name of the tradition, basis of the social cohesion of the nation.

These two historical facts remind that, on one side, women engaged in the feminist battle were aware that the fight against gender inequality wasn't possible unless other inequalities were abolished: this was *the universalistic perspective.* However, on the other side, women movements accepted to fight for their belonging group (as their own nation), in order to reach some specific aims –and, in some cases, they even lost rights.

These processes are the consequence of a basic fact: women represent at the same time a specific component of the society (which has experienced/suffered thousands of years the male domination) and an integral part of the societies' main divisions- as members of the oligarchical classes (aristocracy, bourgeoisie, etc…), militants of political movements fighting for the power and crucial components of ethnic groups, of which they guarantee the reproduction.

Since around twenty years, as a result of the critics addressed by black and post-colonial feminism to mainstream feminism, scholars in gender studies have agreed that the status of women cannot be defined if the articulation between gender, ethnicity and class is ignored. The "*intersectionality*" -gender-class-ethnicity- approach reveals a double theoretical urgency: to revise the concept of "*sisterhood*" that considered all women as the oppressed half of the world, and to take into account the tensions between the universalism of rights and women's difference, deepening the same concept of equality. The intersectionality questions the same UN approach to gender, if it doesn't consider sufficiently the specific contexts and uses a

"model" that may be perceived as "Western-dominated".

In the present global context, in the midst of growing inequalities, women's movements are trapped into issues of equality/inequality in respect to the gender/class/ethnicity articulation.

3. Abolitionism and feminism

Since the Eighteenth century, the "*woman question*" -raised by the British and French "*proto-feminists*"[3], Mary Wollenstonecraft, Olympe de Gouges, Thérogne de Méricourt- was linked to the broad issue of inequalities, discrimination, human rights and citizenship. . The idea of citizenship, which was the product of the British liberal thought and of the French Enlightment, was founded on the principle of equality, which was one of the three words engraved in the Assembly and Commune palaces during the French Revolution, together with freedom and brotherhood. The principle of equality is universalistic, but its legal implementation may signify inclusion of some groups and exclusion of others.

The "*proto-feminists*" showed precisely the conscience that the borders of equality had to go beyond the circle of the adult males. It is no coincidence that the first proto-feminists established parallels between the condition of the women and the one of the black people reduced into slavery. At the same time, it is no coincidence that family –the place where the domination of the women by the men takes place, but which, at the same time, defines the class belonging- with its eventual privileges in front of other components of the society- was considered extremely important for the battle on women's rights. Full equality between women and men was possible *only* if, at the same time, a radical change took place both in the family and in the society, with the suppression of *any* form of slavery and discrimination (against the blacks, the oppressed categories, etc…).

Olympe de Gouges, who claimed for the equality of rights between men and women in civil and political life during the French Revolution, led for years the abolitionist battle against the slavery of the blacks, which was, at the time, legitimized in France by the "*Code Noir*". The battle of Olympe de Gouges, for the black slaves and for the women, was, at the same time, attentive to specific groups and *universalistic*: at the beginning of the Revolution, she published in *the Impatient*, the paper which she directed, a project suggesting several reforms, extremely advanced for the time (even in respect to what proposed the male revolutionary leaders as Robespierre, Marat or Danton): freedom of expression, gender equality, establishment of divorce, abolition of slavery and of the death penalty, creation of a tax on large fortunes, distribution of the land that was not exploited to farmers or cooperatives, creation of just one people's Court (the law was not the same for all sections of society during the Ancien Régime), creation of hospitals for maternity, homes of solidarity for the poor. Olympe's program is not yet completely implemented in Europe!

Considering her program, it is clear that Olympe wanted to promote *a general socio-political change, together with the women's rights*, which she announced in the *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, incorporating, point by point, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789. Olympe de Gouges was condemned to death during the Terror, together with other representatives of the opponents to Robespierre. In fact, she was condemned because her ideas about women and society were considered too dangerous even by the revolutionary "*sansculottes*", and she was threatening a family order that had to be preserved in order to "*save the nation*" against the enemies (the other European nations).

Like Olympe de Gouges, the first American proto-feminists were fervent abolitionist of blacks' slavery. In Europe, proto-feminism was rooted mainly in the British liberal tradition and in the French Enlightenment culture. In the USA, it owed much to the Protestant dissenters' tradition, especially the one of the Quakers, who conveyed at the same time the idea of women's emancipation and a fervent abolitionism. The religious component of American proto-feminism

[3] The term feminism has appeared for the first time at the end of the Nineteenth Century in the USA.

represents an interesting dimension that indicates the complexity of the relationships between women's rights and religion. Therefore, the first figures of a movement fighting for women's rights were also important figures of abolitionism, like the sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké, Lucretia Mott (who was also a Quaker minister) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Mott and Stanton organized in 1848 a Convention on the Rights of Women in Seneca Falls, in upstate New York. The final text of the Convention-the "*Declaration of Sentiments*"- based on the Declaration of Independence of the United States, constituted the founding act of the American feminism. The Declaration lists the grounds for censure against men, as the American colonists had done against King George in the Declaration of Independence: "*The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man towards Women*". It denounces the denial of several rights such as the right to vote (and thus participating in the creation of laws), the access to higher education, and the ministry of the Church in most churches (with the exception- precisely- of the Quaker); child custody practically always granted to the father. The Declaration states that "*men and women are created equal*" and that the signatories would use all the means at their disposal to correct the existing inequalities[4].

The Seneca Falls Convention is a crucial stage in the history of feminism, a term that will appear in the United States, some decades later, when the claims of the Declaration of Sentiments began to be translated into real rights, in respect to participation in civil life (access to University, to the exercise of professions…) and in politics (the right to vote and to be elected). The first signs that the battle for the right to vote would have been won by the women appeared in the late nineteenth century: in 1890, the State of Wyoming and, in 1893, the State of Colorado conceded women the right to vote. It took then thirty years before the right to be generalized all over the United States (1920)[5]. British suffragettes obtained it before their American sisters, in 1919. German women got it too, as a result of the progressive Constitution of the Weimar Republic. In fact, the first women on the earth who got the right of vote were the ones from New Zealand (1893), but the specific context of the country (low presence of women; colonial domination of the whites over the indigenous Maori), reinforces the idea that, even when women win some battles, the articulation between gender/ethnicity and class interferes with the general processes of emancipation. In New Zealand, the improvement in the equality between white men and white women was counter-balanced by the inequality among whites and indigenous people. That was certainly not the outcome Olympe de Gouges – supporter of an "*universalistic cosmopolitanism*"[6] would have wished…The case of New Zealand may have brought arguments to the critics that the Marxists brought to the suffragettes movement –as "*petty bourgeois*"…

4. Feminism, inequality and socialism

All along the Nineteenth century, groups of women in Europe and the USA engaged battles for the civic and political rights and the equality between men and women. The women who engaged in these battles chose different types of action: the "*suffragettes*" movement – especially strong in the UK after 1870- focused women's rights specifically, while other women engaged in movements fighting for a radical societal change.

With the industrial revolution and the formation of the working class, formal rights equality appeared insufficient to assure the social justice, which was denied in practice by the economic oppression of the working class. A new movement was "*haunting*" Europe: Socialism –with its different components and branches. The paths of the socialists and the ones of the women fighting for gender equality were bound to cross.

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[4] http://www.url.it/donnestoria/testi/percorso_900/seneca.htm

[5] The territory of Wyoming was the first one to give women the right to vote in 1869. It was admitted as state in 1890 with the vote to women (in 1893 it was Colorado and in1895 Utah followed).

[6] We have borrowed the definition from Habermas (1996).

The socialist movements, Owenites and Saint-Simonians considered the empowerment of women as an important goal of their programs. The English utopian socialist Robert Owen (1771-1858) proposed a new role for women (household tasks should be delegated to the community), the reform of marriage, the divorce. Many women followed his movement, as Emma Martin, an Evangelical Baptist of modest origins, who left her husband to follow Owen's ideas and raised her two daughters, earning a living from writing and teaching. In France, Claude Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) was in favour of a real revolution in the relations between the sexes. In 1832, two Saint-Simonian women, Désirée Veret and Marie-Reine Guindorf, founded, the first French feminist newspaper, "*La Femme libre*" (The free Woman). In the first issue of the magazine Marie-Reine Guindorf wrote: "*This publication is not speculation, it is a work of apostolate for the freedom and the association of women, having felt deeply the slavery and the nonentity that weigh on our sex. We raise our voices to call women to come with us, to reclaim the place they must occupy in church, state and family. (...) Not having had so far any organization that allowed them to rise to great heights, women were forced to deal with small individual things that have left them in isolation.* ". Other Saint Simon followers were Suzanne Monnier, director of "*La femme nouvelle*", later called "*La Tribune des femmes*" and Claire Demar who wrote "*Ma Loi d'avenir*" (My law of the future), published posthumously, in which she criticized the organization of marriage according to the Napoleonic Civil Code, prescribing obedience and loyalty to the husband.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Flora Tristan (1803-1844), French-born of Peruvian origin, grandmother of the painter Paul Gaugin, is one of the most fascinating characters in the history of socialism, feminism and, more generally, the propagation of rights human. Universalist spirit, Flora advocated a future world without borders, evoking that day "*so desired, when we will all be just human beings, brothers and sisters without carrying the names of English, German, French...*"."*Our homeland*" says Flora, "*must be the universe.*" ("*Notre patrie doit être l'univers*")[7].

Owenites, Sansimonians and Flora Tristan defended an utopian socialism, with a strong humanist connotation, which was gradually abandoned in the second half of the century for the scientific socialism of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The encounters between the "*proto-feminism*" and the scientific socialism were characterized by moments of convergence and moments of separation. For Marx's followers, the class difference was at the core of the fight: with the triumph of socialism, male domination-as any form of domination of man by man-would disappear. With its focus on the class, scientific socialism proved to be attentive to the division between the women of the lower classes and those of the upper classes who tended, like men, to perpetuate the system.

Scientific socialists, with their revolutionary program, had little interest in the punctual battles of the "*suffragettes*": their specific objectives -education for girls and young women, access to universities and professions, the right to vote-, were, for the socialist view, "*bourgeois*" claims, which would not have changed class inequality, the main source of the social conflict. After the abolitionist battle, the class fight entered powerfully in the women's movements, while another challenge appeared: the national question.

5. Inequalities among peoples and the national question. Strange parallels between Italy and China.

Nineteenth century Europe is characterized by the consolidation of nation-states with their promise of citizenship, as a moment of peoples' emancipation, and with the risk of developing exclusionary nationalism as an aggressive ideology. The century was also characterized European colonial expansion, which was made in the name of the accepted inequality between peoples and the mission of "*the white man*" to civilize other cultures. The battle for equality between sexes was deeply marked by these processes, carriers of deep divisions among

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[7] Flora Tristan, "*Nécessité de faire bon accueil aux femmes étrangères*", Delauny, Palais Royal, Paris, 1835, quoted by Leprohon, 1979, pp. 234-235.

groups.

The nationalist issue is extremely important to understand the difficulties women's movements met at the time when the "*patriotic*" pressure is exerted on them. The Italian case is exemplary from this point of view: during the Risorgimento- the nation-building process-, Italian women-as-Cristina of Belgioioso- participated in priority to the struggle for national liberation, putting aside their claims.

After the National Unification, early feminists, like Anna Maria Mozzoni, founded the League to promote women's interests in 1878, engaging in the struggle for suffrage. With the founding of the Socialist Party in 1892, the demand for women's civil and political rights intertwined-in Italy-with the question of the protection of the working class: in the socialist vision, the prospects of emancipation of women coincided with those of the subaltern groups.

The process towards women's emancipation, which was moving on a double track, between feminism and socialism, was blocked by the nationalist backlash of the First World War, which caused a "*strange*" alliance between nationalist groups and some feminists. The interesting collection of essays by Laura Guidi, *Experiencing War Trails: biographical and gender roles between the Risorgimento and the First World War,* published in 2007[8], shows how the First World War was preceded by an ideological female nationalism that abandoned the pacifist positions of the beginning of the century. Among those who glorify war in 1915 there is Anna Maria Mozzoni, which in 1885 had strongly denounced the class character of militarism: "*If your son died in the war and the king has won you are not allowed to cry - you would be a bad patriot and a cowardly sissy* [...] *For you, or woman of the people, what is home? It is the policeman who comes to take your son to do soldier - is the tax collector... - is the guard duty-free treatment...* [...] *Of the glories of this country, its joys, its assets, its favors, not even one arrives up to you* "(Guidi, 2007, p. 100). Yet, thirty years later, the same Mozzoni supported the paradigm of the inevitable antagonism between the races: among the Germans, "*rough and hard, whose imagination is made sad and gruesome by rigorous climates and darkened by endless forests" and "gentle race, and genius "of the Latins," no peaceful relationship is possible*". (Guidi, p. 7)[9].

Guidi analyzes the role of female nationalism that took as a point of reference two journals, "*The Unification of Italy*" and "*Italian mother*". Nationalist women were members of an area numerically restricted, but very visible; having strong links to the political, economic and military establishment, they saw in the war an opportunity to build a new society in which a female elite would have found a leader role. On the occasion of the first World War, these women chose the nationalist front, offering their contribution of educators of masses of women potentially dangerous, easy prey of the socialist influence. Laura Guidi highlights the differences between the interventionist nationalism of these women's movements and the Risorgimento, pointing out at this stage the predominance of racist discourse (in this case, the Latin race against dark Germanic race). "*For the nationalist enemy does not become such because of his actions, on the contrary, for the intrinsic essence of race: it is an innate instinct that drove the Teutonic imperialism to invade the land of others, which instigates to pursue the criminal objective to gain hegemony over the Latin races and the world, renewing the glories of the Holy German Empire. The "German" is an enemy by essence*" (Guidi, p. 100). If the nationalist women expected a reward at the end of the war, in terms of greater women's rights, they created a rift with the socialist ones, who remained faithful to the choice pacifist and internationalist perspective.

Moreover, the conquest of some civil rights in 1919, as the legal emancipation, the recognition of the right of trade and the managing of their belongings, the abolition of the husband's authorization to testify in court, could not be extended to the political sphere because of the authoritarian turn of the fascist regime. In 1922 Italian women won the right to vote in local

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[8] *Vivere la guerra Percorsi biografici e ruoli di genere tra Risorgimento e primo conflitto mondiale*, pubblicato nel 2007 da Clio Press, Naples
[9] A. M. Mozzoni,, Le razze, in «L'unità d'Italia», 15 agosto 1915.

elections, but they could never exercise it, because fascism abolished the election.

The complex interplay between vindication of women's rights and national battle is not just about Europe. The birth of feminism can be located mainly in the West, however, both individual women and groups engaged in the battle for gender equality in non-Western countries, such as Japan and China.

First feminists in Japan appear in the phase of modernization of the country, after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, which abolished the feudal system and introduced some changes in the status of women, such as the possibility to divorce and the right to primary education. An interesting figure of the time was Utako Shimoda, who lived between 1854 and 1936, poet and educator. Utako travelled to Europe to learn about the educational methods used in girls' schools and, on her return, she founded the Jissen Women's University, where she tried to combine the methods of European and Japanese tradition (for example enhancing the educational practices that develop the grace of Japanese women).

Utako played a central role in the formation of Chinese women, founding in Shanghai in 1901 both a school and a publishing house "*Society for the Renewal*", which published the magazine "*The Continent*", widely read by the Chinese elite. In the magazine, Utako advocated her educational philosophy, "*based on the need of education and employment of women*," to improve not only themselves but also the country. (Carpinelli, 2007). The woman question was connected well with that of the re-founding of the Chinese nation, carried out by the nationalists of the first Kuomintang, fighting against the imperial dynasty and the attempt of Western colonization. If "*the first steps of empowerment of women in China are connected to the uprisings of the Taiping (1851-1864) against the Empire and Manchu Boxer (1899-1901) against the Western colonizers*" (Carpinelli, 2007), is in the nationalist struggle that figures such as Qiu Jin, formed in Japan, under the guidance of Utako Shimoda, became active. Qiu Jin fought at the same time for a Republican China freed from colonialism and for women's emancipation. Qiu Jin, who kept a school for girls, was beheaded in 1907, thirty-one years old, on charges of participating in an insurrectional project. The importance of women's emancipation to transform China, based on the progressive Western ideas, was also supported by political leaders who fought for the renewal of China and against the imperial power, such as Sun Yat-Sen, the father of the Chinese Republic. The advent of the Republic in 1911 did not mean, however, the realization of women's rights –as the elite Chinese women had dreamed of, such as the right to vote. Chinese women who fought for the emancipation of women were forced to leave aside their claims in a context in which China was threatened by Western economic colonization through unfair treaties and Japanese expansionism. As the Italian women during the Risorgimento, the Chinese women had to adhere to the national cause carried out by the Kuomintang avanti dal Guomindang[10], putting aside their claims.

The question of the relationship between feminism and the national question is also crucial to understand the processes that took place in the first half of the twentieth century, devastated by two World Wars fought in the name of a violent Fascist nationalism in Germany and Italy and triggered by racist and totalitarian forces. During the Second World War, the battle for women's rights coincided necessarily with the battle against fascism (and therefore with the Resistances in the occupied countries).

6. Gender issues in the global world: a complex picture

What do these examples from the past say about the present context? The national question, which we have seen intertwined with that of feminism emancipationist in Italy and China was revived after World War II, during the process of decolonization and the formation of new

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[10] National Chinese Party o *Zhongguo Guomindang* is the name given to the "*revolutionary Chinese party*" in 1919. It was the main actor of the reunification of China in 1926-°©-27 and ruled the Chinese Republic until 1949. It opposed the Communist party in the political-military fight between 1946 and 1949.

nation-states in the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. During these processes of decolonization, women's claims have often been viewed with suspicion with respect to the battle for the nation. The national question-often intertwined with religious and ethnic identity - it is not a phenomenon of the past, it continues to be present, with his efforts to defend the borders-real or symbolic-of nations.

Class conflict and ethnic/national conflicts have continued to interfere with the "*new*" feminism that developed during the Sixties, first in the United States, then in Europe, bringing new analytical instruments an a new project for the comprehensive transformation of society, overcoming patriarchy in all its aspects and looking for a worldwide "*sisterhood*". Feminist thought has contributed to the overall analysis of social relations, through the concept of gender, focusing attention on the social construction of masculinity and femininity, presented as a set of meanings reified set of stereotypes, roles of internalized, in the family, in society, in politics, in a continuum that eliminates the separation between the private and the public (Scott, 1988a, 1988b). The concept of gender, revealing the social construction that justifies the relations of domination, is an important contribution to social sciences.

However, the first generation of post-war feminists - mainly from Western countries –have focused their critics on the middle-class society, white, patriarchal, sometimes neglecting the problems of ethnic minorities or groups colonized. This has induced the critics by the black feminism and, finally produced the intersectionality theory. For their part, the women of the countries struggling for decolonization or recently decolonized have conducted their battles especially in the context of national elites, with the primary objective of building new countries-often in opposition to Western imperialism.

In the present global world, the encounters between Western women and women from the post-colonial world are not simple, although the gender theory-as an analytical category to deconstruct all the realities of male domination- has represented a basic instrument on which it has been possible to build the United Nations common agenda, up to the Beijing Platform. Still the growth of inequalities inside the countries, the growing differences between countries, the comparison between the U.S., Europe, emerging markets, are undermining the possibility of cross-countries battles. European women are often stuck in purely formal battles for the rights, while women non-Westerners are often attracted by movements proposing strong anti-Western identities.

Moreover, the increase in inequalities raises a crucial question: is the persistence of sexism, discrimination, violence against women, the culmination of the resistances of religious institutions and conservative forces, undemocratic and authoritarian, or is it a consequence of the present World system, shaped by the dominating Western countries and their ideologies (namely market-centered ideologies) (Gallino, 2007) with their formal acceptation of democracy and of human rights?

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