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WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT VS. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA (1970-1999)

Mulheres no Desenvolvimento x Gênero e Desenvolvimento na agenda de desenvolvimento da ONU (1970-1999)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to reassess the contributions of the Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) approaches in the United Nations (UN) development agenda from 1970 to 1999. We address two questions: How did the UN incorporated the GAD perspective in the context of the Beijing Conference, and why the WID perspective remained dominant in the UN development agenda despite the incorporation of gender? We apply a qualitative methodology encompassing a literature review of feminist academics and a deductive approach based on theoretical elements of the agenda-setting framework and the "Three UN" perspective. We argue that the shift from women to gender in the Beijing Conference incorporated the GAD perspective by removing all critical views and adopting a depoliticized and non-confrontational perspective on gender. In this sense, the WID approach remained dominant because it did not contest diplomatic norms and previous consensus related to development.

Keywords: Women. Gender. Development.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é reavaliar as contribuições das abordagens "Mulheres no Desenvolvimento" (MND) e "Gênero e Desenvolvimento" (GED) na agenda de desenvolvimento da Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU) no período 1970-1999. Propomos duas questões: como a perspectiva GED foi incorporada na ONU no contexto da Conferência de Pequim (1995) e por que a abordagem MND permaneceu dominante mesmo após a incorporação do gênero na agenda de desenvolvimento da organização? Aplicamos uma metodologia qualitativa a partir da revisão bibliográfica de autoras feministas e de uma análise dedutiva baseada nos aportes teóricos da abordagem de definição de agenda e da perspectiva das "Três ONUs". Nós defendemos que a mudança de mulheres para gênero na Conferência de Pequim incorporou a abordagem GED por meio da remoção da visão crítica e adoção de uma perspectiva de gênero despolitizada e não confrontacional. Dessa forma, a abordagem MND continuou dominante porque não contestou as normas diplomáticas e os consensos prévios relativos ao desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres. Gênero. Desenvolvimento.

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of women's rights has been an important part of the United Nations (UN) mandate since its creation in 1945, as the preamble of its Charter reaffirms the faith "in the equal rights of men and women" (United Nations, 1945). Nevertheless, both women and gender issues were virtually absent from the UN development agenda in its early years, as women were only

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seen as recipients of some welfare policies, such as nutrition and birth control (Rai, 2011, p. 28). This situation changed with the emergence of the Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) debate in 1970-1999 when different feminist groups, and influential female diplomats and UN officials strongly advocated for incorporating women and gender perspectives in the UN development agenda.

The WID approach dominated the UN in the 1970s, especially after the publication of Ester Boserup's[3] report "Women's role in economic development", where she argued that the division of labor in modernization processes gave men the control of economic resources and, as a consequence, women lost their income, power, and status (Boserup, 2011, p. 40). Drawing on Boserup's findings, the WID approach quickly advanced in the UN. It was based on an economic efficiency argument that women would play a major role in promoting development when their economic rights were guaranteed. With the support of feminist groups, the UN Secretariat focused on assessing the positive effects of integrating women into development policies. Member States in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolutions to define the political guidelines for the integration of the WID agenda in its activities for development. For that, national policies had to guarantee women's economic rights, such as equal access to productive resources, equal labor opportunities, and anti-discrimination laws. By the end of the 1970s, the WID approach was fully incorporated into the UN development agenda.

However, in the 1980s, a strand of feminist scholars criticized how women's rights were subordinated to promoting development in the WID agenda, so they proposed the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Drawing from different perspectives to address intersections between gender relationships and other social hierarchies (such as race, class, and ethnicity), GAD feminists discussed how the burden of economic development on women reaffirmed their subordinate position in social relations and advocated an emancipatory perspective of equal redistribution of power between men and women (Razavi; Miller, 1995, p. 38-39). However, many UN Member States perceived the GAD approach as too confrontational since it contested the status quo of diplomatic norms on the UN development agenda and required structural changes to eliminate gender stereotypes in development policies.

The result of the WID-GAD debate in the 1980s was that the UN began to incorporate the word gender in its vocabulary, but mainly as a synonym for women. The UN Secretariat and Member States continued to focus on the WID approach until the 1990s, when the preparatory work for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing catapulted the GAD perspective. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted in 1995 truly elevated gender as part of the UN development agenda, especially to address the effects of economic structural adjustments on women. However, the WID perspective still dominated UN programs and strategic guidelines on development afterward, although with some consideration of GAD issues. In this sense, gender

[3] Boserup was a Danish economist and specialist on agricultural trade policy who worked for the UN Economic Commission for Europe from 1947-1965 (Turner and Fischer-Kowalski, 2010).

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was translated into the discussions on the economic efficiency approach by addressing gender inequalities inside families, access to resources, and women's reproductive work and its effects on production (Razavi; Miller, 1995, p. 21).

With this context in mind, the objective of this article is to present the WID-GAD debate in the UN from 1970 to 1999 and analyze its conceptual and discursive contributions to the UN development agenda. We examine the following questions: How did UN Member States and Secretariat incorporate the GAD perspective in the context of the Beijing Conference and its immediate aftermath? Why did the WID perspective remain dominant in the UN development agenda despite the incorporation of gender?

To answer these questions, we employ a deductive approach and analyze the theoretical claims of the international agenda-setting framework (Livingston, 1992, p. 316) and the "Three UN" perspective (Weiss *et al.*, 2009, p. 124) against discursive and institutional developments of the WID-GAD agenda in the UN. The agenda-setting framework investigates how actors mobilize knowledge, communication channels, institutional loci, and diplomatic norms as access points to salience a specific issue in the decision-making process. As for the "Three UN" perspective, it understands the UN as a networked space for agenda-setting that emerges from the interaction among three types of actors with a specific institutional position in the organization[4]: the Member States (the First UN), the Secretariat (the Second UN), and non-territorial actors such as civil society organizations, experts and other stakeholders (the Third UN).

We argue that there was an agenda shift to gender at the Beijing Conference because GAD advocates from the Third UN pursued an inside influence strategy with the Second UN, which reverberated to the First UN. However, GAD was incorporated in a depoliticized way, and the word gender was reduced to a neutral and non-confrontational meaning. There were two reasons for it: Firstly, the GAD approach was proposed by feminist experts, especially from the Global South, who had less access to the UN in terms of knowledge and institutional *loci*. In addition, the First UN perceived this approach as confrontational, and the Second UN found it more difficult to incorporate an emancipatory standpoint in its recommendations. Secondly, the WID perspective continued to dominate the agenda-setting process in the UN during and after Beijing because its knowledge emerged from women who were both part of the Second and Third UN, hence they had better communication and institutional access to press for WID as an agenda item. Besides, the WID approach did not contest existing diplomatic norms, and it was relatively easy for the First UN to institutionalize it in their main decisions in the UNGA.

The methodology is qualitative, exploring how feminist non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the Third UN brought new perceptions about WID and GAD; how the Second UN generated new knowledge on the issue pushed by the inputs of the Third UN; and how the First

[4] It is important to highlight that the First, Second, and Third UNs are not homogeneous groups. Each UN is composed of a group of actors that vary in size, power, ideas, and interests; but each one shares a specific institutional position in the organization.

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UN incorporated the WID-GAD perspectives in its decisions about the UN development agenda. Based on the literature review of feminist academics, we present a historical analysis of the WID-GAD debate and its institutionalization in the UN from 1970-1999. We also collected data from official UN documents, including resolutions, plans of action, reports, and official statements adopted by the UNGA in the context of the Beijing Conference, from the preparatory debates in 1994 until the implementation of the Beijing Platform from 1995 to 1999. We employ content analysis to investigate specific discursive and conceptual framing of women and gender in these documents.

This paper is organized as follows: We first present a historical overview of the WID-GAD debate in the 1970s and 1980s. Secondly, we present the "Three UN" perspective and the agenda-setting framework. Thirdly, we focus on the Beijing Conference and the attempts to promote an agenda shift from WID to GAD in the 1990s. Fourthly, we analyze how the First and Second UN incorporated the GAD perspective proposed by the Third UN in their documents after the Beijing Conference. In the conclusion, we return to our questions and highlight the constraints to the GAD approach in the UN development agenda.

WID AND GAD IN THE UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA (1970-1980)

In its early years, the UN adopted a trickle-down approach to development. Through aid from developed countries and with technical support from UN agencies, it would be possible to promote development – understood as economic growth and industrialization – in developing countries. The development debate in the 1940s and 1950s lacked an approach to the specific situation of women, and they were understood only as recipients of some welfare policies, such as nutrition and birth control for women. That changed with the emergency of the WID-GAD debate in the UN, whose extensive literature offers a historical overview of incorporating both WID and GAD perspectives in the UN development agenda. In this section, we draw from the literature review of feminist authors, such as Goetz (1988; 1995), Tinker (1990), Young (1993), Moser (1993), Razavi and Miller (1995), Baden and Goetz (1997), Manzano (2006), Campano (2006), Jaquette and Staudt (2006), Okali (2011), Rai (2011), Aguinaga *et al*. (2011), Federici (2012), Everett and Charlton (2014), and Paredes (2024) in order to present a historical analysis of the main concepts and political views of the WID and GAD approaches and how their institutionalization in the UN evolved throughout the decades of 1970-1980.

In the 1960s, liberal feminist groups realized that development policies excluded women from their benefits and opportunities and disadvantaged them in many aspects due to the absence of equal economic rights (United Nations, 1966, p. 2-3). So, in the early 1970s, feminists from the United States "involved in some way with the Carter government, who work in and around Washington DC or in the UN agencies (many from Northern Europe) began to network together" (Young, 1993, p. 25). According to Tinker (1990, p. 28) and Young (1993, p. 25), those women became WID advocates and, later, gained the support of feminists in academia who were

responsible for researching a variety of issues, especially women's productive role and the unequal division of labor between women and men.

One example was the work of Ester Boserup, a Danish economist who worked for the UN Economic Commission for Europe from 1947-1965. Her seminal report for the UN Commission on the Status of Women, "Women's role in economic development" (1970), consolidated the view that the division of labor in modernization processes had negative consequences for women. Analyzing the modernization of African agriculture, Boserup found that women lost their traditional role as farmers, and the control over agricultural production was given to men. With this division of work – in which men applied modern methods in agriculture while women continued to use traditional cultivation – women were "(...) discouraged from participating in agriculture, and [were] glad to abandon cultivation whenever the increase in their husband's income makes it possible" (Boserup, 2011, p. 40). Therefore, women lost not only their contribution to economic growth but also their income, power, and status.

Drawing on the findings of Boserup's research, liberal feminist groups[5] and female UN staff started to advocate the WID approach in the 1970s based on three arguments. The first one was how development processes had different impacts on men and women, with negative consequences for the latter. The second one was the importance of advancing women's status from wives and mothers to productive workers, giving them conditions to be more efficient, which included promoting equal access to productive resources, equal labor opportunities, training programs, anti-discrimination laws, and access to credit and loans (Everett and Charlton, 2014, p. 32). The third one was the efficiency approach, based on the positive correlation between the productive role of women and their active contribution to development focused on "... what women can contribute to the development process" (Razavi; Miller, 1995, p. 2). The compelling argument of economic efficiency allowed the WID approach to be quickly incorporated into the UN development agenda. For WID advocates, presenting an agenda that could be accepted and integrated into the existing UN development programs was important. So, by centering the WID approach on the economic efficiency argument, they were able to convince both the UN Secretariat and Member States (especially national planners and international donors) that investments to insert women into development processes would not only promote equality but also economies would grow, conditions of life would improve, and new generations would have greater opportunities.

The first victory of WID advocates was in 1975 when the first World Conference on International Women's Year was held in Mexico City. UN Member States adopted the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which covered the main goals of the WID approach, such as the provision of "technical training to make their [women] contribution more effective in terms of production" and women participation "in

[5] The Women's Committee of the Society for International Development (SID) in the United States started to mobilize attention to the fact that development policies were responsible for increasing inequality between men and women. Soon, the group was known as the WID group, contributing to the creation of this approach (Campano, 2006, p. 68).

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decision-making and in the planning and implementation of all programs and projects" (United Nations, 1976, p. 12). In the same year, Member States proclaimed the First Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985) to accelerate the implementation of the World Plan of Action (United Nations General Assembly, 1975, p. 95). The First Decade for Women was crucial in putting in place the international and national norms and policies to promote women's economic rights and inclusion in development processes[6] (Razavi; Miller 1995, p. 6). Campano (2006, p. 70) emphasizes that during the First World Conference and the First Decade for Women, WID advocates focused on an equality strategy, eliminating discrimination, integrating women in development policies, and increasing women's participation in public life and international cooperation.

By the end of the Decade for Women in 1985, the UN had integrated women into its development agenda in an equitable way. However, many feminist groups argued that the Decade for Women failed to debate the contradictions in WID. As Everett and Charlton (2014, p. 33) put it, the WID approach was able to advance the feminist agenda. Still, it did not "consider the origins of female subordination in patriarchal family and social relations, as well as in forms of economic production". There was a misleading view that women's economic rights were contingent on their positive contribution to development, which resulted in a strategy "that prioritized what development needs from women over what women need from development" (Razavi; Miller, 1995, p. 1).

Feminist groups from the Global South presented particular criticism of the WID approach. Manzano (2006, p. 36) explains that women's subordination encompassed countries' colonial histories and positions in the international system. In this sense, ending women's subordination required transformations in power relations in the public and private spheres, as well as in national and international contexts. In addition, Goetz (1988, p. 480) affirms that the WID agenda reinforced the top-down approach to development in UN programs, which excluded the situation of women in the Global South. Based on the modernization theory of development, these programs targeted women as a homogenous group that needed special treatment, ignoring the relationships between men and women and the different identities of women. In the end, many UN programs reproduced the sexual division of labor they were supposed to overcome.

Considering the context of a global economic crisis in the 1980s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged as a response to the limitations of the WID perspective[7].

[6] Besides, the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 consolidated the recognition of women's economic rights as defended by WID advocates. Both articles 13 and 14 state the inclusion of women as an integral part of economic and social life, ensuring their access to all economic resources. This provision was especially important to rural women, who should have equal access to agricultural credit and loans and equal treatment in the possession of land (United Nations, 1979, p. 5-6). According to Campano (2006, p. 73), during CEDAW, WID advocates focused on a strategy against poverty. They highlighted the productive role of women and how their insertion into the economy would push them out of poverty while contributing to economic growth.

[7] Besides the WID approach, Aguinaga *et al.* (2011, p. 59) highlight the emergence of the Women and Development (WAD) perspective, elaborated by Marxists and based on the dependency theory. Although WAD was a more analytical approach to

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GAD advocates – mainly feminist scholars – criticized the economic structural adjustments Western economists and bureaucrats promoted in that decade. The cut in social programs, in fact, transferred to women's domestic and unremunerated work the burden of public spending, reinforcing gender subordination and discrimination (Federici, 2012, p. 87). In this context, feminists in academia – especially sociologists and anthropologists – conceptualized gender as a social construction and cultural representation that determined women's subordination in society and was perpetuated by institutions such as the state, the family, religion, and the market (Razavi; Miller 1995, p. 12; p. 18). Based on the concept of gender as a social construction, the GAD approach focused on gender roles both women and men perform not only in productive but also in reproductive activities. GAD encompassed a variety of theoretical and practical perspectives of feminism that advocated for an equitable redistribution of power between genders, so "men must also be the target of attempts to redress gender inequities, that their interests are also socially constructed and amenable to change" (Goetz, 1995, p. 8).

Besides, GAD advocates turned their attention to the differences among women instead of seeing them as a homogenous group, highlighting other hierarchies that are related to gender power relations, such as race, class, and ethnicity. The term "women" was seen as problematic because it obfuscated those hierarchies and denied the social construction of gender. Therefore, GAD emphasized that women's subordination had multiple causes, resulting in conflicts among women because they had different interests and agendas. Goetz (1988, p. 483) highlights the role of Global South feminists in addressing the way women were seen as a unified and a-historical category by dismantling "the fictive totality of 'woman' of Western feminist discourse to reveal its rootedness in the identity of the white Western women".

Feminist scholars from the Global South, such as Aguinaga *et al.* (2011, p. 64-65), point out how Southern feminists criticized the hegemonic feminism of the Global North, which attempted to homogenize women in the Third World, paternalistically viewing them as objects of development policies and programs and ignoring their diversity and experiences of resistance. Paredes (2024, p. 149-150), a Latin American feminist activist, emphasizes the need to denaturalize the hierarchies among women by focusing on understanding power relations in which women can be "exploiters and oppressors of other women, men, and nature".

GAD criticism of the insufficiency of WID to promote gender equality oriented the debates in the 1980 World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen and the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi. In both conferences, WID advocates pushed for the economic efficiency argument as a response to the economic crisis and the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s (Campano, 2006, p. 75). Meanwhile, the feminist groups that advocated for a GAD agenda underscored the need for an all-encompassing strategy to overcome the power structures that result in the subordination of

development than WID, it did not consider women's subordination when analyzing inequalities among social classes and still focused on women's productivity.

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women in development. Therefore, women's empowerment at all levels was essential in the design of development strategies to address gender inequality in economic and social structures (Razavi; Miller 1995, p. 31; p. 35). From a Global South perspective, Paredes (2024, p. 149-150) highlights how women from the Global North benefited from the neoliberal agenda in the 1980s while, in the Global South, women experienced the burden of the structural adjustments. For instance, women from developing countries migrate to developed countries to perform low-paid jobs (mainly care work) for Western women.

During the Nairobi Conference in 1985, feminists from the Global South pushed for a GAD approach as a response to the neoliberal agenda. The Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) group, created in 1984 with headquarters in Fiji and composed of feminist advocates from the Global South, particularly defended this strategy. They argued that the economic crisis in the Third World pushed women into poverty, and structural adjustments and cuts in public policies increased women's workload in the household and low-paid jobs (Aguinaga *et al.*, 2011, p. 63-64). At the Nairobi conference, DAWN presented the book "Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era – Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective" and proposed a gender-oriented agenda focused on "the responsibilities of Northern countries towards poverty and inequality in the Global South, questioning not only local, but global patriarchal structures" (Luca, 2007, p. 43).

According to Okali (2011, p. 7), GAD criticism resonated and was acknowledged in both conferences, resulting in a consensus that the WID emphasis on women's productive role increased their labor burden and that it was necessary to promote a gender perspective in development strategies. Specifically, the 1985 Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies was a landmark UN document because it abandoned the idea of women as an instrument to promote development and addressed how structural changes were necessary to eliminate gender stereotypes and gender biases from development policies. For instance, one recommended strategy was "to promote diversification of women's employment and to eliminate gender bias from labour markets" (United Nations, 1986, p. 48).

Nevertheless, despite recognizing the main issues posed by the GAD approach, the WID perspective was still dominant when translating the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies into development programs. Traditional WID policies to increase women's access to productive resources, such as credit, capital, and land, were defended throughout the 1980s as practical solutions to address gender in the UN development agenda. In general, there is a consensus in the literature that incorporating the GAD approach in the UN in the 1980s was neutral and depoliticized as a result of two factors. The first one is the context of structural adjustment and neoliberal reforms, which increased the feminization of poverty, an agenda pursued by WID advocates since the 1970s. The second one was the dominance of agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank, that continued to adopt a WID approach in their projects (Moser, 1993, p. 135). Jaquette and Staudt (2006, p. 31) addressed the depoliticization of gender by giving the example of donor agencies, which

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integrated GAD into their programs but still focused on the WID approach to development. As highlighted by Everett and Charlton (2014, p. 41), the incorporation of gender was neutralized, and development was seen as a technical issue instead of a political one. It became clear that, at this point, the GAD approach could not fill the gaps left by WID and consolidate itself in practical and institutional terms in the UN.

At the UN, Member States considered WID as a less "threatening approach", while GAD was understood as "a more confrontational" one because it was based on the analysis of social power relations that led to women's subordination (Moser, 1993, p. 4). As a consequence, GAD advocates needed to pursue a new strategy to elevate gender as part of the UN development agenda, and that took place in the following decade in the context of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In order to explore how there was a shift to gender in the 1990s, we propose a combination of two frameworks to analyze the WID-GAD debate: the agenda-setting process and the "Three UN" perspective.

AGENDA-SETTING PROCESS AND THE "THREE UN"

The discursive and institutional characteristics of the WID-GAD debate in the UN development agenda in the 1990s can be better understood by a deductive analysis, applying the theoretical elements of the agenda-setting approach and the "Three UN" perspective. On the one hand, the agenda-setting dynamics in the WID-GAD debate entailed an intricate bargaining process to establish new norms and behaviors about women and gender in the UN development agenda. On the other hand, such an agenda-setting process involved a complex relationship between different UN actors and their specific agendas: the UN Member States (the First UN); the UN Secretariat (the Second UN); and feminist groups (the Third UN).

Agenda-setting can be defined as "the process of raising issues to salience among the relevant community of actors" (Livingston 1992, p. 313). Since agenda-setting is a competitive process, actors will only thrive in pressuring for new agendas if they are able to embed an agenda item with the definition of a problem, a set of alternative or preferred solutions, and a convincing call so the organization can include the item in its collective practice and regular work. For an agenda item to succeed, actors must engage in a strategic framing process, conceptualized by Joachim (2007, p. 6) as an "attempt to package the problems they identify and the solutions they consider appropriate so policymakers will find them attractive".

Considering that agendas can only survive by continuous interaction among actors, it is crucial to understand that the UN is not a monolithic organization but rather a conglomerate of different actors. According to Weiss *et al*. (2009, p. 124), what we call "the UN" is actually a faceted organization with three types of actors[8] that have specific mandates and advance their agendas

[8] Innes Claude (1996) inaugurated the distinction between the First UN and the Second UN. He employed the expressions First UN for the Secretariat and Second UN for the Member States. However, Weiss, Carayannis, and Jolly (2009) inverted the expressions to emphasize the intergovernmental character of the UN, and we follow this inversion.

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from different institutional positions inside it: the First UN, composed of Member States; the Second UN, composed of the Secretariat; and the Third UN, consisting of civil society, experts and other non-formal actors that interact with the organization.

The First UN is formed by all 193 Member States, signatories of the San Francisco Charter. As an intergovernmental arena, Member States are endowed with decision-making power in the UN, and each has the right to defend its ideas and interests in the organization. Considering the heterogeneity and diversity among States, coordination and political will among them are key to developing and implementing multilateral frameworks. The Second UN is formed by the Secretariat under the coordination and direction of the Secretary-General. The Secretariat is a body of international civil servants responsible for implementing the decisions of the First UN. However, this does not mean that the Second UN lacks autonomy. It is entitled to its own legal personality, and UN officials – although with different institutional positions and powers to influence States – have the professional obligation to be impartial and independent from the pressures of Member States (Weiss *et al*., 2009, p. 126).

Lesser recognized by the literature, the Third UN encompasses a diverse range of non-territorial actors: "intellectuals, scholars, consultants, think tanks, NGOs, the for-profit private sector, and the media – that interacts with the intergovernmental machinery of the First UN and the Second UN to formulate and refine ideas and decision-making at key junctures in policy processes" (Weiss and Carayannis, 2021, p. 2). Except for some NGOs and other civil society organizations with consultative status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), actors from the Third UN are not formal members, so they can enter and exit the organization at any time. Weiss and Carayannis (2021) argue that this group cannot be understood as an outsider actor because it is an essential part of the organization. They not only provide the First and Second UN with knowledge, research, analysis, and policy solutions, but they are also an integral part of the negotiation process because "for most issues [in the UN] the Third UN has led" (Weiss and Carayannis, 2021, p. 20).

It is important to consider that the First, the Second, and the Third UNs are not homogeneous groups. Although each group has its own institutional position and mandates, the actors within each group vary greatly in size, power, ideas, and interests. Due to these asymmetries, each type of UN actor needs not only to negotiate with the other groups but also are required to align their positions within the group, which does not always happen. Therefore, for UN actors to be well-positioned in the agenda-setting process for successfully framing an agenda item, they seek specific access points in the organization to gain a prominent position. Livingston (1992, p. 316) states that actors pursue knowledge, communication channels, institutional *loci*, and diplomatic norms as the four main access points in an agenda-setting process. Knowledge is the consensual understanding of an issue that guides actors' actions. Communication channels are patterns of global exchange of ideas and views. Institutional *loci* are the arenas where decisions are taken with legitimacy, such as international organizations or

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regimes. Diplomatic norms are legitimate and effective types of interstate behavior, such as laws, policies, special relationships, and action-forcing summits or conferences.

Actors from the "Three UN" need to mobilize these access points in different ways and levels so that others can consider and accept favored agenda items, counteracting the possibility of new framings that challenge dominant norms and ideas. Some actors may use an inside influence strategy, exploiting existing access points, such as departing from existing communication channels or norms to introduce new frames incrementally. Others prefer an outside influence strategy, employing resources to produce new access points. The creation of a new paradigm to define an existing problem or the establishment of a new international institution or conference are examples of this strategy (Livingston, 1992, p. 326).

At the same time, actors can lack access to these points, constraining their framing strategies in the agenda-setting process. That is why actors need to have a perception of political opportunities, find allies, or create political alignments or conflicts to legitimize the proposed framing. However, influence strategies also require the mobilization of formal and informal organizational structures to help actors push an agenda item forward. Examples of organizational structures are the existence of individuals who will lead the framing process, the creation of specific expertise to legitimize the intended framing, and the establishment of a heterogeneous constituency interested in the new agenda item (Joachim, 2003, p. 252).

The differentiation of these "Three UN" allows us to understand how the WID-GAD agenda-setting process evolved in the organization as a shared group process, leading to shifts in the UN development agenda. Feminist groups and experts (the Third UN) pushed for the WID-GAD approaches in the development agenda in 1970-1990 with the support of the Secretariat (the Second UN) in order to convince Member States (the First UN) to include the agenda item in its regular work. By understanding the "whole UN" as a networked space for agenda-setting that emerges from the interaction among the "Three UN", our next step is to explore this dynamic from the emergence of gender debate at the Beijing Conference in 1995 and the subsequent depoliticization of the GAD approach by First and Second UN.

THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (1995): THE GENDER DIMENSION IN THE WID APPROACH

The 1990s are known as the decade of world conferences in the UN. In its resolution 45/129, of 14 December 1990, the UNGA decided to convene a new world conference on women to review and assess the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies and adopting a Platform for Action on key issues that posed major obstacles to the advancement of women by the end of the century (United Nations General Assembly, 1990). So, after the world conferences on education in 1990, environment in 1992, human rights in 1993, and population in 1994, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing from 4-15 September 1995.

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With the objective of analyzing how the "Three UN" mobilized the GAD approach and the predominance of the WID approach despite the incorporation of gender in the Beijing Conference, we explore how Member States, the Secretariat, and feminist groups mobilized different access points to push for WID and GAD agendas. We combine a content analysis of official UN documents with a qualitative analysis provided by feminist authors regarding the advancement of depoliticization of gender in the UN during the 1990s to present how women and gender were conceptually and discursively framed in the conference.

In the preparatory work for the Beijing Conference, the Second UN discussed many of the issues raised by the GAD approach, and the term gender was widely used by the Secretariat as a category to address women's issues. That was the case of the "1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development", the most important preparatory document in terms of consolidating the knowledge about development issues to be discussed at the conference. In this report, the Second UN claimed that the goal of the survey was to "look at development through a gender lens", as a "key aspect of the structure of society" in order to "identify obstacles to its improvement". For that, the Secretariat used a methodology based on a gender analysis that "views women and men in terms of the roles they play in society, roles which can change as societies change" (United Nations General Assembly, 1994, p. 3).

Due to the effects of economic structural adjustments on women, the Secretariat addressed in the report how the discrimination based on gender created distortions in the labor market and produced economic inefficiency. Acknowledging that both women and men could perform productive and reproductive roles, the focus of the report was to give women the proper tools to draw level with the new demands of the world economy and the labor market, such as upgrading their skills and catching up with the new exigencies of the economy in developing countries so they could "benefit from economic growth to a greater extent than men" (United Nations General Assembly, 1994, p. 4).

However, the Second UN's recommendations departed from the GAD agenda because the Secretariat neither questioned the pressures the prevailing economic model put on gender inequality nor promoted women's emancipation and empowerment (Jaquette; Staudt, 2006, p. 28-29). The focus of the UN Secretariat was to integrate women into the economic model of the 1990s, making them an important part of the labor force to generate economic resources. As Razavi and Miller (1995, p. 21) affirm, the incorporation of gender issues in the 1990s was less based on the GAD approach and more aligned with including a gender dimension in the economic efficiency approach. This process led to the advocacy for public policies (such as childcare, health, and education) and laws to ensure that women could integrate into the workforce, reducing unremunerated work and increasing economic efficiency.

Feminist activists from the Third UN pursued an inside influence strategy at the Beijing Conference with the goal of elevating gender as part of the UN development agenda. However, the different feminist organizations did not perform as a cohesive group and responded in

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different ways to the gender and economic efficiency approach during the NGO Forum of the Beijing Conference from 30 August- 8 September 1995[9]. On one side of the debate, many activists and lobbyists (mainly, but not exclusively, from the North) believed that without framing their strategies based on economic efficiency policies, it would not be possible to influence governments to shift their attention to the WID-GAD agenda. For them, pushing this agenda forward would require instrumental arguments that could persuade policymakers and bureaucrats to address women's concerns. As put by Baden and Goetz (1997, p. 7), claims based on gender and economic efficiency "appear justified to get gender issues on the table in organizations whose mandate and goals do not embrace social justice or equity".

On the other side, there were women's groups from the Global South who had two years to prepare for the conference and, with funding from Northern donors, became professionalized and well-organized in networks with the UN (Sandler and Goetz, 2020, p. 243). Southern feminist groups were vocal critics of the so-called "gender trap", referring to the way the word gender was used as a synonym for women to undermine the discussion about their subordinate position in economic and social relations. Their critique was also directed towards the gender agenda imposed by Northern agencies, which masked neoliberal policies under a gender discourse. In other words, gender was understood as a neutral substitute for women, and the debate was emptied of a power dimension as envisaged by the GAD advocates (Baden and Goetz, 1997, p. 6).

One example of this critique is presented by Paredes (2011, p. 6), who argued that Western feminists who worked in UN entities, especially the CEDAW, the IMF, and the World Bank, contributed to strengthening the false narrative that development would bring the advancement of women. International cooperation for development embraced the concept of women's empowerment to create policies and strategies to foster entrepreneurship and independence. This discourse masked the real objective of the neoliberal agenda, putting on women the responsibility to overcome the economic and social crises of capitalism. So, they continued to bear the burden of reproductive work and had to perform low-paid jobs without benefiting from public policies, such as social security.

The views and perspectives of Southern feminists were abundant during the NGO Forum, and this visibility was considered one of their major achievements. They participated strongly during the sessions regarding the analytic overview of the challenges posed by globalization on women's lives and the strategies of advocacy and action. Global South feminists from grassroots

[9] The North-South divide among feminist groups and advocates in the UN Conferences on Women was a major issue in the 1980s and these differences continued to appear in the preparatory works for the NGO Forum of the Beijing Conference. For feminist groups from the Global South, participation in the Forum came with financial and institutional challenges, which is shown in the data of NGO participation per region: 40% of participants came from Europe and North America, against 45% of Asia and Pacific, 8% of Africa, 5% of Latin America and the Caribbean, and 2% of Western Asia (NGO Forum on Women, 1995, p. 16). Especially in Latin America, there is a vast amount of literature analyzing the ambivalences of the feminist movement in organizing itself to attend the Beijing Conference. According to Alvarez (1997, p. 156, own translation): "Indeed, it appears that new boundaries are being drawn within the Latin American feminist field, and sharp and dualistic distinctions were prevalent in the activists' discourses related to the Beijing process: the 'bureaucratic-institutional movement' versus the 'independent feminists', the 'specialists' versus the 'metaphorical' feminists, the 'women's movement' versus the 'movement of women's projects', and the 'NGO-focused feminists' versus 'the movement' itself".

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movements and collectives presented their concerns that Beijing was creating a new "gender technocracy" apart from the fundamental feminist principles (Alvarez, 1997, P. 156). Nevertheless, representatives from the Global North prevailed in the closing session to discuss future engagement on global women's issues. Hillary Clinton, then First Lady of the United States, delivered the closing statement, and only formal NGOs – instead of grassroots movements – presented their regional reports with their strategies after Beijing, framing the conclusion of the event within the accepted discourse on women and gender (NGO Forum on Women, 1995, p. 54).

Besides, the fact that the NGO Forum took place one week before the official launch of the Beijing Conference demonstrated how Member States wanted to isolate the start of intergovernmental negotiations from the influence of the Third UN. After all, there was enough dissensus within the First UN on the definition of gender itself. In the last Member State's preparatory meeting for the Beijing Conference held on 15 March-7 April 1995, 60% of the draft document was bracketed, and most of the disagreement was around the word "gender" (Pacheco, Guzmán, Jaime, 1996, p. 149).

It is important to note that if differences inside the Third UN emerged from a North-South perspective, this was not the predominant divide within the First UN. According to Nijeholt, Swiebel, and Vargas (2019, p. 58), one particularity of Beijing in comparison to other conferences in the 1990s was that "conflicts between governments and between governments and civil society were not expressed along North-South lines, or in terms of differences between 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' nations. Rather the principal tension was between non-confessional and confessional governments", which included religious and cultural issues.

Some delegates from Catholic countries – both from the Global North and Global South – questioned the meaning of the word in the draft Platform for Action. Even though the main concern of using the term gender was related to sexual and reproductive rights issues, that would have implications for the WID-GAD agenda, as some delegates defended that men should be privileged in the labor market, for instance. As a result, an informal contact group was created to define an agreed language for the term. The contact group concluded that "the word 'gender' had been commonly used and understood in its ordinary, generally accepted usage in numerous other United Nations forums and conferences" (United Nations, 1995a, p. 218). Therefore, the common meaning of gender would also apply to the Beijing Conference and its Platform for Action.

The vagueness of the definition provided by the contact group is a trace of diplomatic language in UN documents. Diplomats representing the First UN are used to sacrifice the clarity of concepts and use ambiguous terms for the sake of reaching consensus in international documents, and that was the case of the word gender in the negotiations of the Platform for Action (Šarčević, 1997, p. 204). Even so, this document was one of the most contested in its final negotiations in Beijing: Catholic countries were against the word gender, and they asked for bracketing the word throughout the more-than-hundred-page document (Baden and Goetz, 1997, p. 11).

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Despite 34 countries presenting reservations to the document, the Platform for Action was adopted by consensus on 15 September 1995, consolidating the use of gender as an agreed language, although ambiguously. In some parts of the final document, the word was used as a synonym for women, while in others, there was a clear emphasis on addressing gender power relations and making them more equal and equitable. In the issue of women and poverty, there was a clear instrumentalization of gender, as the Platform claims that "the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty" (United Nations, 1995b, p. 19) and that "the release of women's productive potential is pivotal to breaking the cycle of poverty so that women can share fully in the benefits of development" (United Nations, 1995b, p. 20). Regarding women and the economy, the relationship between gender and power was more evident by recognizing that "many policies and programmes may continue to contribute to inequalities between women and men" (United Nations, 1995b, p. 68). The actions proposed looked at structural changes in the control over economic resources, access to employment and work conditions, and redistributing the burden of family responsibilities and unpaid work between women and men.

These examples show that the First UN conceptually and discursively framed gender during the Beijing Conference, giving it a neutral meaning. As for the Second UN, the GAD approach was incorporated in its reports but in combination with WID, which contributed to the depoliticization of gender in the UN development agenda. Then, as highlighted by feminists from the Global South, GAD became a less confrontational approach and easier to integrate into institutions' development programs, advancing the depoliticization of gender in the following years after Beijing.

AFTER BEIJING: ADVANCING THE DEPOLITICIZATION OF THE GAD AGENDA

With the conclusion of the Beijing Conference, UN Member States and the Secretariat used the word gender as a neutral term in UN resolutions and reports, and it was employed "to minimize the political and contested character of relations between women and men" (Baden and Goetz, 1997, p. 10). We apply a content analysis of the UNGA resolutions and statements under the agenda item "Women in development" from 1995-1999; and the preparation and publication of the 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development. The analysis of these processes within the First and Second UN demonstrates that the depoliticization of gender was fully consolidated just five years after the conference.

In the First UN, the work of the UNGA Second Committee under the agenda item "Women in development"[10] reflected the incorporation of the GAD agenda in such depoliticized terms. As

[10] The UNGA Second Committee has been addressing the issue of women in development since 1975. That year, the agenda item was named "Measures for the integration of women in development". Then, in 1976, the item was renamed "Effective mobilization of women in development". After that, in the sessions of 1979, 1985, and 1987, the agenda item was "Effective mobilization and integration of women in development". In 1989, the item's name was shortened to "Integration of women in development". Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform in 1995, the item was renamed "Women in development" and has remained this way ever since (United Nations General Assembly, 2019, p. 51).

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the name of the agenda item suggests, the UNGA mainly addressed this topic from a WID perspective, and gender was not truly part of the vocabulary of the resolutions adopted by this committee until the Beijing Platform for Action[11]. After that, the committee became responsible for revising and following up on the implementation of the Beijing Platform in issues related to development, economy, and poverty.

Table 1 summarizes a content analysis of all nine resolutions on "Women in Development" adopted by the UNGA from 1975-1999. Until 1989, there were no mentions of the word "gender" in any of the resolutions adopted, when the UNGA used the expression "gender disaggregated data and indicators" for the first time to call upon the Secretariat to generate specific data to analyze the role of women in development. Only two months after Beijing, in its resolution 50/104 of 20 December 1995, the UNGA urged governments to incorporate and mainstream a gender perspective in all policies and programs for the first time. The Assembly also called governments to adopt gender-sensitive policies to ensure "the full and equal participation of women in economic activities" (United Nations General Assembly, 1995, p. 2). The UNGA used a similar language in the subsequent resolutions adopted in the 1990s.

Despite the use of the word gender, a few parts of the resolutions adopted by the First UN between 1995 and 1999 truly incorporated a GAD perspective, and most of them were in the preamble. In its resolutions of 1997 and 1999, the UNGA mobilized a GAD perspective to demonstrate women's burden of household and care work by recognizing the "principle of shared responsibility between women and men for the achievement of gender equality" (United Nations General Assembly, 1997b, p. 2; 1999b, p. 3.) Besides, the UNGA recognized that market liberalization and structural adjustment programs made women more vulnerable due to the cutback in social services, marginalization in markets such as agriculture, and increased poverty rates. However, as for the operative parts of these resolutions, the First UN focused on the WID efficiency argument. The UNGA mainly recommended measures to improve women's contribution to promoting development and eradicating poverty, such as expanding women's access to economic and social resources in order to increase their productivity in different sectors.

[11] Even though resolution 44/171, of 19 December 1989, presented two mentions of gender in the context of the Nairobi Looking-Forward Strategies, the focus was on the generation of disaggregated data and indicators. The use of gender as a category for thinking development was only incorporated after Beijing.

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Table 1 – Mentions of gender in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly Second Committee under the agenda item "Women in development" (1975-1999)

Resolution	Agenda item	Number of mentions related to gender	Phrase and number of mentions
A/RES/3524 (XXX) 15 December 1975	Measures for the integration of women in development	0	-
A/RES/31/175 21 December 1976	Effective mobilization of women in development	0	-
A/RES/33/200 29 January 1979	Effective mobilization and integration of women in development	0	-
A/RES/40/204 17 December 1985	Effective mobilization and integration of women in development	0	-
A/RES/42/178 11 December 1987	Effective mobilization and integration of women in development	0	-
A/RES/44/171 19 December 1989	Integration of women in development	2	Gender disaggregated data and indicators (1) Gender disaggregated data (1)
A/RES/50/104 20 December 1995	Women in development	3	Gender perspective (2) Gender sensitive policies (1)
A/RES/52/195 18 December 1997	Women in development	10	Gender mainstreaming (3) Gender equality (2) Gender perspective (2) Gender sensitive policies (1) Gender sensitive work environments (1) Gender concerns (1)
A/RES/54/210 22 December 1999	Women in development	11	Gender equality (5) Gender mainstreaming (2) Gender perspective (2) Gender sensitive work environments (1) Gender concerns (1)

Source: Own elaboration.

In the Second UN, the process of incorporating GAD was more complex because the Secretariat claimed a shift "from the intellectual and political approach of 'women in development' (WID) to the new approach of 'gender and development' (GAD)" in its "1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work"[12] (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 6). The 1999 report innovated in bringing a theoretical discussion – which was not very common in the reports of the Secretary-General – to support the argument that WID was definitely in the past. It presented the critiques made by feminist scholars from the Global South that the WID agenda emphasized women's productive role in the economy without considering the negative effects of globalization that undermined gender equality and reinforced gender power relations (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 8). From this standpoint, the

[12] Before that, in 1997, the Secretary-General presented a report entitled "Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: women in development" (A/52/345). The main goal of the report was to introduce a gender mainstreaming perspective in all UN policies. It focused on applying "gender analysis to the unpaid sector of the economy, fiscal policies and trade liberalization policies" (United Nations General Assembly, 1997a, p. 2). Regarding the GAD agenda, the report highlighted the role of women's reproductive activities, such as unpaid jobs, which were not included in national statistics. However, most of the analysis in the report focused on the WID approach to economic efficiency through the inclusion of women in the economy. One example was the role of education in women's lives: the report addressed the necessity of women to acquire high-level skills to keep jobs in industry.

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Secretariat presented a clear definition of gender based on the GAD approach. This conceptualization was a pioneering step in the WID-GAD debate since the negotiations at the Beijing Conference avoided providing such a definition:

> Gender is defined as the social meanings given to biological sex differences. It is an ideological and cultural construct but is also reproduced within the realm of material practices. It affects the distribution of resources, wealth, work, decision-making and political power, and the enjoyment of rights and entitlements within the family as well as public life. Despite variations across cultures and over time, gender relations throughout the world entail asymmetry of power between men and women as a pervasive trait. Thus, gender is a social stratifier, and in this sense it is similar to other stratifiers such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and age. It helps us understand the social construction of gender identities and the unequal structure of power that underlies the relationship between the sexes (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 7-8).

Drawing from the concept of gender as a social construction, including women's productive and reproductive roles[13], the Second UN emphasized that the GAD approach was crucial to address the asymmetry of power between women and men in the context of globalization. Data from the 1990s showed that the flexibilization of the labor market and the economic adjustments aimed at cutting governments' expenses in social services accentuated the gender gap in both developed and developing countries (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 96). One example was the "feminization of labor", an expression that characterized the phenomenon of women entering the labor market and accepting lower pay and precarious working conditions (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 17). In the report, the Secretariat endorsed the analysis of feminist scholars showing the negative connotation of the term "feminization of labor" since women were forced to accept poor conditions in the labor market as a result of the flexibilization of employment (Jain, 2005, p. 108-109).

However, the GAD theoretical foundation presented in the report was not completely translated into the Second UN's recommendations to the First UN. Instead of promoting a shift, the Second UN attempted to accommodate the less controversial aspects of the GAD approach[14] through the elaboration and implementation of gender-aware policies that could "minimize the negative effects of globalization while consolidating its benefits" (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 96). Whereas for the Third UN, especially for GAD advocates from the Global South, there was no doubt that globalization and neoliberalism deepened gender inequalities and created new forms of gender subordination, the Secretariat affirmed in the report that globalization favored women's integration in the labor market. Therefore, women could benefit

[13] In the 1999 report, the Secretariat acknowledged that women's reproductive role had a major function in societal organization because it defined "how the labour force is reproduced and maintained, and how the society keeps afloat its members who are left behind by rapid economic change and misfortune" (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 19). Besides, women's reproductive role represented "gendered unpaid (non-market) activities" that "play a crucial role in how the paid (market) economy works" (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 19).

[14] The accommodation of WID and GAD in the 1999 report neglected other important issues highlighted by GAD feminists. In addressing women in the labor market or women's reproductive role (as an unpaid activity), the report did not consider the intersectionality between gender, social class, ethnicity, and race, which is essential to understand that the position of women in informal or unpaid jobs can be determined not only by gender but also by those social and economic stratifiers.

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from globalization if gender equality was promoted as a means to reduce discrimination and improve economic efficiency (United Nations General Assembly, 1999a, p. 98).

The content of the 1999 report was at the center of the First UN discussions for the occasion of the UNGA Second Committee formal debate that year. The North-South divide that was less prominent in the Beijing Conference reemerged in the context of poverty and inequality resulting from the neoliberal reforms in the 1990s. For Northern countries, there was an overall preference for the WID approach, especially focusing on women as a separate targeted group in their development cooperation projects. The statements delivered by the European Union and other European countries recognized some of the issues raised by the GAD approach, such as the negative aspects of globalization and the burden of unpaid work on women. However, the main recommendations supported by the group focused on the WID perspective: "The European Union gave priority attention to mainstreaming women in development. That effort should be complemented by positive action designed to promote equal access of men and women to economic, political and social development opportunities" (United Nations General Assembly, 1999c, p. 4).

As for Member States from the Global South, the GAD perspective was crucial to understanding the situation of women in developing countries in the context of globalization. The Group of 77 and China, a political group composed of developing countries, stated that "the growing trend of multinational companies to transfer their production activities, generally to developing countries where labour in the informal sector was cheap, and the resulting exploitation of women, was particularly alarming" (United Nations General Assembly, 1999c, p. 4). However, the group did not state any specific recommendations besides promoting gender mainstreaming and discussing measures to address the impact of globalization on women's jobs.

In the end, both the First and the Second UNs re-interpreted gender to accommodate "institutional needs" (Razavi; Miller, 1995, p. 41) and used the category not to defend the transformation of power relations between women and men, as advocated by the GAD feminists from the Third UN; but rather this political meaning was neutralized to accommodate women in the context of globalization. In the short period of five years, the process after Beijing quickly translated into the "'technification' or conversion of gender into a technical endeavor, which diminishes its transformative potential, failing to challenge the neoliberal capitalist relations of exploitation and subordination that dominate the global political agenda in the early 21st century" (Campano, 2006, p. 85, own translation[15]). As a result of this depoliticization, some GAD feminists from the Global South decided to move away from the UN by the end of the decade because they considered that the organization stopped being a space for advancing the feminist agenda and became conniving with neoliberalism[16]. They decided not to be part of the Third UN anymore and

[15] From the original: "'tecnificación' o conversión de género en una labor técnica, que pierde su potencial transformador sin desafiar las relaciones capitalistas neoliberales de explotación y subordinación que en los primeros años del siglo XXI dominan la agenda política global" (Campano, 2006, p. 85).

[16] One example is Communitarian Feminism (*Feminismo Comunitário*), which emerged in the 2000s as an integral part of Indigenous and popular resistance movements in South America, especially in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. Those movements had an anti-

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turned to grassroots movements in other civil society fora, such as the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001[17] (Alvarez, 2014, p. 69).

CONCLUSION

The article analyzed the WID-GAD debate in the UN during 1970-1999. Based on a qualitative methodology and combining the agenda-setting approach and the "Three UN" perspective, we argued that WID dominated the UN development agenda because its knowledge emerged from feminists who were part of the UN Secretariat and had better access to push for WID as an agenda item in the UN. Drawing from a literature review of feminist academics, we analyzed the consolidation of the WID perspective in the 1970s and how feminists, especially from the Global South, challenged it during the 1980s by proposing the GAD approach, which focused on ending gender inequalities and women's subordination. We applied a content analysis of UN documents – resolutions, reports, plans of action, and statements – to examine the advancement of gender during the Beijing Conference (1995) and its immediate aftermath, although in a depoliticized and non-confrontational way.

In the 1970s, the access of WID advocates of the Third UN to the Second UN officials and the First UN negotiation rooms facilitated their path to introducing this new agenda item. In this sense, the WID approach succeeded because it did not question existing diplomatic norms and previous consensus related to development, such as women's economic efficiency and integration into the labor market. So, it was relatively easy for the First and Second UNs to institutionalize WID from the 1970s on. In the context of economic structural adjustments in the 1980s, feminist academics presented their criticism to WID and proposed the GAD approach, which emphasized how gender inequalities in development were based not only on the unequal economic distribution of resources (as suggested by WID) but also on the relation between gender and other hierarchies (such as race, class, and ethnicity). So, GAD advocated for ending women's subordination through their emancipation and empowerment.

However, the GAD approach was proposed especially by Global South feminists from the Third UN who had less access to the organization. They criticized the way the word gender was used as a synonym for women to undermine the discussion about their subordinate position in economic and social relations and stressed how Western donor agencies masked neoliberal policies under a gender discourse. Conversely, Global North feminists believed that the economic

neoliberal and anti-imperialist agenda and advocated for a new form of State based on redistribution, and social, economic, and cultural rights (Aguinaga *et al.*, 2011, p. 76). Paredes (2018, p. 145; p. 155) is one of the representatives of the Communitarian feminists and explains the concept of "de-patriarchalization" (*despatricarcalización*), which advocates for the destruction of a patriarchal system that has two bases: one that is ancestral (before 1492) and another after European colonization of the Americas. She criticizes the appropriation of Indigenous women's resistance by Western feminist academics who compartmentalize Indigenous women's knowledge into different approaches to feminism, such as equality feminism, diversity feminism, decolonial feminism, ecofeminism, etc.

[17]Alvarez (2014, p. 69) highlights the role of the Peruvian feminist advocate Virginia Vargas, who coordinated the Latin-American regional group for the Beijing Preparatory Conference in the 1990s. Vargas was disappointed with the way gender was becoming a neutral language in the UN and coopted by neoliberalism and decided to join other feminists in the Feminist Articulation Marcosur (*Articulación Feminista Marcosur*) to influence civil society anti-globalization movements.

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efficiency argument was a crucial way to influence governments to shift their attention from WID to GAD. In the end, GAD was perceived by the First UN as a confrontational approach, so it was more challenging for the Second UN to incorporate it into its documents. Despite these challenges, the idea of gender progressively advanced in the 1980s, although in more neutral terms under the argument of promoting women's economic efficiency.

During the negotiations at the Beijing Conference (1995), the different perspectives between feminists from the Global North and the Global South set the tone of the NGO Forum, and Southern advocates criticized how Northern NGOs were more amenable to the neoliberal discourse of economic efficiency and the alleged benefits of globalization to women. If the North-South divide was the main line of debate within the Third UN, that was not the case in the First UN. Conflicts among Member States emerged between non-confessional and confessional governments regarding cultural and religious matters. Catholic delegates from North and Global South had concerns about the term gender and women's sexual and reproductive rights. Despite those issues, at the end of the conference, the Third UN was successful in elevating the GAD approach as part of the UN development agenda, however, gender lost its political meaning and was emptied in the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. Although this general language was the compromise to include gender in the document and reach consensus, it also contributed to advancing its depoliticization.

In the five years after Beijing, the agenda-setting process was not completed since the Third UN could not influence the First and the Second UN in translating the recommendations of the Beijing Platform of Action into concrete policies to transform gender power relations. We demonstrated that GAD did not replace the WID perspective in the UN development agenda. Both visions were combined, and for that, GAD had to lose its confrontational approach and replace its considerations on power with a less politicized use of the term gender. We analyzed two evidence of this depoliticization of gender after Beijing (1995-1999). Considering the First UN, when we looked at the resolutions adopted by the UNGA under the agenda item "Women in development," the incorporation of the word gender is explicit. From zero mentions from 1975 to 1987, the resolutions adopted after Beijing have plenty of mentions of gender. However, the content of these resolutions still focused on the WID efficiency argument. As for the Second UN, we analyzed the "1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development" since the Secretariat claimed a shift from WID to GAD in this report. But instead of making the promised shift, we found that the Second UN actually attempted to accommodate the less controversial aspects of the GAD approach through gender-sensitive policies that could include women in the so-called benefits of globalization. In sum, the incorporation of GAD in the UN obfuscated feminist demands, considering that both the First and the Second UNs neutralized the political meaning of gender to accommodate their institutional needs better.

Finally, one major consequence of the depoliticization of gender after Beijing was that the First and the Second UNs did not react against neoliberalism during the 1990s. Instead, they proposed an accommodation of WID and GAD agendas, focusing on promoting the benefits of

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globalization while addressing its negative impacts on women. At the end of the 1990s, neoliberalism presented a "more humane, multicultural, and participative face" (Alvarez, 2014, p. 58, own translation[18]) and part of the Third UN, especially from the Global North, not only became partners in that discourse but also advocated for women's empowerment through their integration in the globalized economy. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by UN Member States in 2000 marked the triumph of the neoliberal approach in the organization, which reduced the GAD agenda into two main goals: promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3) and improve maternal health (Goal 5). In this sense, the MDGs contributed to deepening the depoliticization of gender in the UN, and it lost its political meaning in favor of a technocratic dimension that privileged target and data indicators of development.

As neoliberalism dominated the UN development agenda and the private sector became an important partner in achieving the MDGs, part of the Third UN, especially from the Global South, grew apart from the UN and turned their efforts to combating neoliberalism in other international fora and were part of anti-globalization movements around the world (Alvarez, 2014, p. 69). Therefore, the incorporation of GAD in the UN obfuscated feminist movements' demands – mostly related to women's rights in the Global South – and became part of international institutions' and donor agencies' strategies for economic development.

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[18] From the original: "face mais humana, multicultural e participativa" (Alvarez, 2014, p. 58).

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