



What Do Ukranian Women Tell Us About the Women Peace and Security Agenda of Security Studies?

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In her book “Bananas, Beaches, and Bases,” Cynthia Enloe asked the question of “where are the women?” in international peace and security.¹ Recently, the war between Russia and Ukraine shows us that women’s presence is crucial in all sectors of conflict and conflict resolution. Notably, the participation of Ukrainian women in nationwide resistance against the Russian invasion has underlined the value of the UN’s Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Since the Maidan protests² in late 2013, women have been playing crucial roles in Ukraine. As pointed out by Ukraine’s First Lady Olena Zelenska, “Ukrainian resistance against Russia has a female face”.³ Once more the war between Russia and Ukraine show that the conflicts brought challenges and opportunities for the emancipation of women, but also caused growing threats to their human security. However, the vitality of following the WPS agenda for global peace and security architecture was not reflected in academic debates within Security Studies. In this short analysis, the state of the WPS agenda in Security Studies will be examined.

Enloe’s question “where are the women?” in international peace and security was a stark reminder of the lack of feminist approaches in Security Studies. Enloe and other feminist scholars revealed how theories of international relations explain security through the eyes and sensibilities of men. In this context, feminist scholars criticized the absence of the gender dimension in dominant theories and practices of international security. As part of the critical approaches to Security Studies, feminist scholars have discussed how women’s voices are silenced in claiming security and how this silence is tolerated -even encouraged- within mainstream security studies.

As revealed in a recent study, Security Studies is still considered as “insular,” “clubby,” and an “Old Boys’ Network.”⁴ Based on the results of a 2019 survey of members of the International Security Studies Section (ISSS) of the International Studies Association (ISA), Rublee et al.’s study (2020) shows striking gender differences in women members’ experiences. The study revealed that women in the International Security Studies Section experience (1) harassment, (2) negative experiences participating in various section activities, (3) more significant barriers to attending and being selected for the section’s ISA program, and (4) a sense of feeling unwelcome at section meetings.⁵

Feminists’ questioning of the place of women in international security also had repercussions on the policy-making domain. The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The resolution was a reaffirmation of the importance of women’s role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, the resolution stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Resolution 1325 also had a fundamental impact on the peace and security policies and practices at all levels including national, regional, and international. The peace and security practices of security organizations and local communities are also affected by this resolution. Resolution 1325 was a significant step forward in understanding security issues outside the traditional state security context. It involves two significant areas where the UN Member States must make visible progress: violence against women in conflict, and increasing women's participation in conflict prevention and peace talks. These two areas were elaborated into four pillars namely prevention, protection, participation, and relief/recovery.⁶

The ratification of Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace, and Security” have underlined the vitality of integrating gender perspectives into Security Studies. the WPS agenda serves as a significant international gender equality initiative, and it is considered a challenge to the conventional global peace and security architecture.⁷ However, the significance of the WPS agenda did not reflect in scholarly research in Security Studies.

To underline this point, 10 high-impact Security Studies journals were selected. Titles and abstracts of the articles that were published between 2001 and 2021 are searched by

using keywords “women”, “1325”, “UNSCR 1325”, and “Women Peace and Security.” The search results show that even after 20 years since UNSCR 1325 was ratified, the Women Peace and Security agenda did not find its place at the scholarly agenda in Security Studies. In total 38 articles were found. However, there are only 6 articles directly focusing on WPS agenda. (2 articles in European Journal of International Security; 3 articles in Conflict, Security & Development, 1 article in Journal of Global Security Studies). Other articles indirectly touch upon the WPS agenda; 8 articles focus on women soldiers/women combatants and 4 articles deal with the security/insecurity of women. The majority of the articles are about “gendering security”, “gendering conflict”, “gender mainstreaming”, and “gender-responsive security sector reform.” For the analyses, authors employed the following conceptual and theoretical frameworks: Security Sector Reform / Conflict Resolution / Peace-building / Human Security / Insecurity / Securitization -de-securitization, Gendering - Gender Mainstreaming.

Even a quick literature search shows us that despite the interventions of feminist scholars, security studies remained a masculine field. This is not just about the lack of women experts in Security Studies. The number of women in Security Studies has been growing among the new generation of experts and scholars. However, as was shown by Rublee et al., women experts and scholars have negative experiences and they feel unwelcome at scholarly meetings. Besides the inequality and discrimination towards women experts, the content and topics of the academic research still tended to cover hard security topics.⁸

To conclude, in 20 years, less than 40 articles were published in high-impact Security Studies journals covering gender-security nexus. The majority of these articles were written by women authors. This publication pattern underlines the prevailed division of labor in the discipline: men study hard security, women study soft security. Moreover, when studying gender in Security Studies, even women scholars tended to inquire about women either as warriors or as victims in war and conflict, not the WPS agenda. Except for the years 2020 and 2021 (the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325), there is a clear lack of interest in the WPS agenda and the human security of women. Even though more than half the UN’s member states have adopted National Action Plans in the context of Resolution 1325, the WPS agenda has not secured its place within Security Studies. Thus, the WPS-related topics and gendered perspectives are rarely considered as publishable in high-impact Security

Studies journals. Since the WPS elucidates the importance and impact of women in peace and security operations, it is crucial to incorporate the WPS agenda in Security Studies.

¹ Enloe, C. H. (2000) *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

² Maidan projects also known as EuroMaidan protests started In late November 2013, Ukrainians took to the streets in peaceful protest after then-president Viktor Yanukovich chose not to sign an agreement that would have integrated the country more closely with the European Union. Protests continued into 2014, then the government began cracking down on the demonstrators. The size of the protests only grew in reaction and turned into what was termed “the revolution of dignity.”

³ Hislop, M. (2022) “Our resistance has a female face’: Ukraine’s First Lady Olena Zelenska thanks Ukrainian women,” *Women’s Agenda*, March 2. URL: <https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/our-resistance-has-a-female-face-ukraines-first-lady-olena-zelenska-thanks-ukrainian-women/>

⁴ Rublee, M.R., Jackson, E.B., Parajon, E., Peterson, S. & Duncombe, C. (2020) “Do You Feel Welcome? Gendered Experiences in International Security Studies,” *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5(1), 216–226.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ UN Security Council (2000) S/RES/1325 (2000)

https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SC_ResolutionWomenPeaceSecurity_SRES1325%282000%29%28english_o.pdf

⁷ Kirby, P. & Shepherd, L. J. (2021) “Women, Peace, and Security: Mapping the (Re)Production of a Policy Ecosystem,” *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 6(3), 1-25.

⁸ Rublee et al. “Do You Feel Welcome?”



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