



DOI: 10.22363/2313-1438-2022-24-1-42-52

Research article / Научная статья

Feminist Foreign Policy and Gender Justice on the International Agenda

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Abstract. The global political elite has developed a pragmatic approach to addressing gender justice issues based on rationality and patriarchy, which hinders the activities of women. There is an urgent need to develop and implement the most efficient, inclusive and emancipatory practices in the light of experience. This article reveals an understanding of the content and meaning of feminist foreign policy in the context of official international content. It assesses the impact of UNSCR 1325 on the development of feminist foreign policy and gender justice. The author concludes that certain fundamental limitations of the document prevent the achievement of real goals lobbied by international organizations and feminist scientists, as well as the deconstruction of gender mainstreaming.

Keywords: feminist theory, UNSCR 1325, feminist foreign policy, international relations, gender mainstreaming, women in politics, feminist international relations, gendering the international relations

For citation: Abbasov, H.A. (2022). Feminist foreign policy and gender justice on the international agenda. *RUDN Journal of Political Science*, 24(1), 42–52. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2022-24-1-42-52>

Феминистская внешняя политика и гендерная справедливость в международной повестке

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Аннотация. В статье раскрывается понимание содержания и значение феминистской внешней политики в контексте официального международного контента. Оценивается влияние содержания Резолюции 1325 СБ ООН на развитие феминистской внешней политики и гендерной справедливости. В результате был сделан вывод об определенных фундаментальных ограничениях документа, которые препятствуют достижению реальных целей, лоббируемых международными организациями и учеными-феминистками, а также деконструкции учета гендерной проблематики. Отмечается прагматичный подход глобальной политической элиты к

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решению проблем гендерной справедливости, основой которого является рациональность и патриархальность, что препятствует международной деятельности женщин. Возникает необходимость в разработке и внедрении с учетом имеющегося опыта наиболее эффективных, инклюзивных и эмансипирующих практик.

Ключевые слова: феминистская внешняя политика, феминистская теория, Резолюция 1325 Совета Безопасности ООН, феминистская внешняя политика, международные отношения, гендерный мейнстриминг, женщины в политике, феминистские международные отношения, гендерные международные отношения

Для цитирования: *Abbasov H.A. Feminist foreign policy and gender justice on the international agenda // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Политология. 2022. Т. 24. № 1. С. 42–52. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2022-24-1-42-52>*

Introduction

Ubi concordia, ibi victoria. The complexity of contemporary International Relations (IR) shows that one of the essential obstacles of peace development is to find a consensus between the parts involved, as to find a solution which is suitable for everyone, one should listen, or at least hear the needs of the parts involved. As the world entered the post-colonial era, the “civilized” world recognized the inevitability of involving the “*damnés*” [Fanon 1961] in the participation of building a sustainable future. Nevertheless, the review of 585 peace agreements from 1990 to 2009 including only four references to women in relation to the development (UN Women, 2012)¹ demonstrates exceptional “sensitivity” of the “civilized” world to 3,8 billion people (WB, 2020)² while building that sustainable future.

Surprisingly, after 33 years “since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)”, more than two decades after “issuing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” (UN Women 2012) and 20 years after the historical United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)1325³ “often described in the relevant literature as ‘groundbreaking’” [Cohn 2008 cited in Shepherd 2011] the global political elite “succeed” to exclude women from the negotiation table. The presence of this phenomenon in IR impedes the implementation of policies designed to achieve an equal world of opportunities, as the Sen (1999) has argued that “development is the process of enlarging people’s choices”;⁴ thus it is government’s responsibility to

¹ UN Women (2012). Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence – World [Online]. ReliefWeb. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/women%E2%80%99s-participation-peace-negotiations-connections-between-presence-and-influence> (accessed: 19.09.2021).

² World Bank (2020). Population, Total | Data [Online]. URL: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL> (accessed: 19.09.2021).

³ United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (2000). Resolution 1325’, S/RES/1325 [Online]. URL: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/> (accessed: 19.09.2021).

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ed. (2001). The DAC Guidelines. Poverty Reduction. International development. Paris: OECD.

provide social opportunities, participative freedoms and transparency guarantees [Maslow 1943]. In the meantime, the variety of feminist camps has shown the competence to critically evaluate and contribute to the aforementioned issues by using an inclusive, unbiased, decolonized lens to make an insightful analysis, discovering the stories of the most marginalized groups and making louder the voices of the ones unheard.

While the world is entering a new milestone of global relations, Academia lacks contemporary instruments to examine and interpret the modern megatrends.⁵ Consequently, the academic community experiences difficulties in ignoring the contribution of feminist scholars in understanding and researching the new global challenges. Notably, while the “doors” of the Academia were “slightly open” for woman only for studies of “women issues”, the feminist scholars have taken their studies straight to the “fieldwork” [Zalewski 2014] to hear the real experiences. As a result, women have empowered themselves to achieve pathbreaking results in lobbying women involvement in conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building, both theoretically and practically emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming and feminist-informed foreign policy.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

The pragmatic nature of contemporary IR shows zero tolerance for abstract and romantic ideas. The growth of feminist approaches come a long way through numbers of conflicts and individual experiences to hone its’ craft of practicality. The growth of feminist ideas and tools in addressing the issues of war and peace “received intense debate at the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi” as the pioneering bottom-up approach was introduced “to complement the dominant state-centric top-down approach of peacemaking” [Pratt, Richter-Devroe 2011]. The further implication of this approach to various conflicts globally emphasized the importance of challenging the issues of women and security in order to design a sustainable plan of peace-building. As a result, the Namibian and Beijing Platforms for Action and NGO Working Group on Women and Armed Conflict (NGOWG) made a considerable effort to lobby for holding a session on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). On 31 October 2000, the Resolution with a discourse previously depersonalized and hidden by realist approach, and with a “language of national security that speaks out of the multiple experiences of both women and men” [Tickner 1993] was passed unanimously.

The document within its’ 18 operational paragraphs covers three central issues: participation of women in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, the protection of women’s rights and the adoption of a gender perspective in peace operations, negotiations and agreements [Shepherd 2011]. The global political elite demonstrated an outstanding level of recognition and engagement, as there were

⁵ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2016). Five Megatrends And Their Implications for Global Defense & Security [Online]. PwC. URL: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/archive/archive-government-public-services/publications/five-megatrends.html> (accessed: 19.09.2021).

more than 150 translations and 82 National Action Plans (NAPs) for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 domestically. “Unexpectedly”, these efforts were not enough to bring the solution and peace to the “women issues” globally. The more profound analysis of the UNSCR 1325 shows that the document has certain fundamental limitations which hamper to achieve the real goals lobbied by international platforms for actions, NGOs and feminist scholars. The most crucial part in addressing and promoting any issue is the delivery and tone, as human beings have an irrational and emotional nature. Pratt and Richter-Devroe (2011) have argued that WPS-agenda employs “an understanding of gender that is ‘largely synonymous with biological sex’” sustaining “deeply engrained myths of the woman as in need of masculinized protection” [Shepherd 2011; Eschle 2020].

Moreover, the content and textual analysis of the Resolution and further reports show that the victimization of women is also backed by the language and images used by the UN and its’ institutions to portray women.⁶ Challenging this issue is critically vital for the advance of feminist thought and gender mainstreaming, as the hundreds of millions of women worldwide work diligently to create the opportunities for emancipation, empowerment and equality. Furthermore, the UN institutions demonstrate the lack of awareness on issues of intersectionality, as the interrelation of “gender and other social categories, such as nationality, class, ethnicity, religion and sexuality are absent or actively prevented in such representations” [Pratt, Richter-Devroe 2011]. Under these circumstances, the global political governance project a utopian reality where the systems of power are represented in isolation from one another, ignoring the “intersect of unequal material realities and distinctive social and cultural experiences mutually constructing one another” [Acker 1999; Collins 2000; Collins, Chepp 2013]. The employment of such an approach favours the universalization of women as a one general, imprecise, vague category, neglecting the unique and distinct experiences of billions disadvantaged due to their race, class, gender and sexuality.

The absence of this discourse in the agenda of platforms and organizations “where problems are framed, priorities identified, and solutions devised” (UNESCO 2018),⁷ affect the IR theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the presence of intersectionality means inclusiveness and signifies the broadmindedness for new tools and approaches to challenge the political, social and economic issues taking into consideration the diversity of scholars and their theories. However, while the global governance debates on the relevance of realist, liberal, Marxist and constructivist agenda to international agenda, and apply these theories to develop their policies, the diversity of feminist theories and camps are represented with a universal feminist category. Universalization of gender as an

⁶ Cambridge English Dictionary (n.d.) LANGUAGE | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary [Online]. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/language> (accessed: 19.09.2021).

⁷ UNESCO (2018). Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review 2018: Meeting Our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education – UNESCO Digital Library [Online]. URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261593> (accessed: 19.09.2021).

analytical tool marginalizes the discourse of intersectionality [Al-Ali, Pratt 2009; Eschle 2020], as “different feminisms suggest different visions of peace and peace-building” [Pratt, Richter-Devroe 2011]. Correspondingly, the poor representation of debates among feminist camps on international agenda may even “become an obstacle to achieving gender justice and security” [Ibid.], as it hampers to design profound and insightful policies and its’ implementation, what affects the everyday life of women globally. Additionally, this distortion may cause misunderstanding of the distinct demands of different women activisms marginalizing the public perception of their efficiency. It is fundamental to realize the importance of diversity of thinking and approaches, as the emergence of a feminist agenda in global governance brings the attention of the non-state actors, corporate interest and popular culture; thus one should understand the core and real values of feminist approaches before “mainstreaming the gender”.

Deconstruction of Gender Mainstreaming

The profound analysis of UNSCR 1325 shows that “while some feminist scholars celebrate the ‘introduction of progressive feminist content in international security’”, the methods and instruments in addressing these issues may be questioned on militarism and imperialism [Basu 2016; Aggestam, Rosamond 2019]. Natalie Hudson [Hudson 2009] questions the contemporary gender agenda if it “really help[s] bring global attention to issues of people that are normally marginalized? Has it meant more resources and involvement by state and non-state actors?” The practical experience demonstrates that the global political elite has a very pragmatic approach on “problem-solving”, as the core of *realpolitik* is constituted on the belief in rationality and centuries-long patriarchal experience. The embedment of these norms in the global institutions and their methods “become a challenge for women’s inclusion and performance” [Kronsell 2016], as the feminist approach to peace and conflicts suggest sensory practices due to practicality of inclusiveness in examining the human experiences.

The acknowledgement of this aspect is critically essential for an insightful understanding of the “everyday experiences” of people in conflict and post-conflict zones. Analogously, as the language is a system consisting of words or phrases mirroring the lived experience, we as human beings (un)consciously use words expressing senses to describe war: “the cry for war/peace; sight of suffering; touch of violence/care; smell of death/disease; the taste of victory (sweet) or defeat (bitter)” [McLeod, O’Reilly 2019]. Therefore, the embodiment of gender lenses in international institutions provides critical theory with a firm analytical tool to address patriarchal “rules of the game” [Brzezinski 1997], as if it is “not carefully examined, it is simply reproduced” [Kronsell 2015]. The contemporary feminist scholars and camps have made a considerable contribution to actualizing and mainstreaming the gender agenda theoretically [Abels 2012; Sotirovič, Kontvaine 2021] and empirically. Moreover, the issues of language and (mis/non) representation of gender in international institutions previously mentioned,

encouraged the growth of masculinity and generated marginalization of femininity in public perception.

Connell [2009] defined the concept of masculinity as social structure determining the “difference in gender regimes”, thus this approach allows to examine the “distinctions within masculinities”. The significant advance of feminist camps in the last two decades contributed unique instruments to design bottom-up approaches to question the decisions made at the “top”. The integration of these instruments produce a unique vision on the identities and practices of contemporary actors of IR – Ian Manners [2010] argues that the EU as an actor of IR has a particular identity, as de-masculinised Europe rely on “skills like cooperation, communication” often associated with femininity, while the actions of United States on the international arena in post 9/11 era are instead re-masculinized. Another example of re-masculinized global power is Vladimir Putin’s Russia “with a particular militarized imperialist politics backed up by Russian gender regime” [Sperling 2015; Kronsell 2016]. Under these circumstances, the European identity and values are oppressed surrounded by heterosexist rational-strategists and advocates of warrior-like masculinities [Morgan 2018]. The truths of realpolitik neglect expression of any empathy or inclusiveness, as the patriarchal nature of IR, is constituted on values of pragmatism, conservatism and rationality. Consequently, Khanna (2004) argues that the combination of “masculine features of strength and assertiveness with a sense of being in touch with a feminine style” creates a unique metrosexual identity of Europe. The emergence of this perception in combination with the abovementioned misrepresentation of women in international institutions produces disadvantaging conditions for the participation of women in peace-building operations and negotiations, promoting the rationale of “just add women”, in the best case.

The combination of these aspects at the international arena influences the policies and traditional actors of IR. For instance, despite having the values of equality and inclusiveness in its’ core, the European Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)⁸ is influenced by the pragmatic nature of IR, what affects not only the women “protected” within the border homeland, but also the “Other”. The analyses of the nature of missions in Somalia and Mali, where EU images itself as “gentle civilizer” [Schlag 2012]⁹ transferring not only military knowledge but also “creating better soldiers and citizens” (Impetus 13, 2012) stressing the moral values not only to protect the homeland femininity but also to train subordinate masculinity how to protect their “Vulnerable Other femininity against the Other masculinity”

⁸ Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) structure, instruments, agencies (2012). IMPETUS (2006–2014) ‘Newsletter of EU Military Staff’, Numbers 1–17, [Online]. EEAS – European External Action Service – European Commission. URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5392/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp-structure-instruments-agencies_en (accessed: 12.09.2021).

⁹ Debusscher, P. (2014). Gender Mainstreaming on the Ground? The Case of EU Development Aid Towards Rwanda [Online]. SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2523368. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. URL: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2523368> (accessed: 12.09.2021).

[Stern 2011; Kronsell 2016]. The concerns of the EU over the potential threat of Other masculinities emerges from the weakness demonstrated in handling with “state building obstructionists, radical ethnonationalists and ‘cancer at the heart of Bosnian society’ – organized criminals” [O’Reilly 2012] within Europe’s “own backyard during the conflict in the Balkans”¹⁰. Despite, self-imaging these policies as feminist-informed, the consequences corresponds to the logic of “protector needs the one to protect”. Notwithstanding, there are some examples of countries which has not limited themselves with just translating the UNSCR 1325 or even adoption of NAPs, but launched a feminist foreign policy.

Feminist Foreign Policy

The end of the Post-Cold war era often is described in the relevant literature as a shift from the elite-oriented policy to dialogical, centering the experiences of marginalized groups and minorities, respecting the human rights and international law. The emergence of these aspects in the practices of traditional and non-state actors of IR is also called the scholarship of “good states”, which take the responsibility of bringing the global justice beyond their borders [Chandler 2006]. The core idea of ethical foreign policy is to guarantee sustainable, transformative change “which requires sensitivity to the needs of ‘others’” [Aggestam, Rosamond 2019b]. Correspondingly, the sensitivity of the issue provides an influential platform for the imperialist West to manipulate with the agenda for global “good citizens” and identify and intervene in internal affairs of the ones identified as unethical Others, predominately where the West is interested in underdevelopment and anarchic order... for various reasons. Nevertheless, there are a few examples of states (primarily) interested in protecting the rights of marginalized groups while taking responsibility for their moral duties.

Unlike the states self-imagining themselves as global “messiahs”, the example of Scandinavian states demonstrated the critical engagement with ethical scholarship, as the profound studies show that ethical foreign policy “entirely lacks a focus on gender (in)justice” (ibid.), while feminist camps “places gender equality, discrimination and violence at the center of discourse”. The starting point for understanding the feminist foreign policy is its’ fundamental distinction in the progressiveness of ideas declared. Despite the title “ethical”, the ethical foreign policy likewise, the WPS and UNSCR 1325 has a gendered ideology. As an example, as the global “good citizens” take the responsibility to “take care” of the ones disadvantaged or oppressed, the values of ethicality refer to “care” as a maternal and innately peaceful feminine feature, “an assumption that has been contested and rejected in feminist IR scholarship” [Aggestam, Rosamond 2019b; Tafakori 2021]. This rationale once again undermines the differences between women, their unique experiences and intersectionality by putting labels of the

¹⁰ Andersson, J.J. Armed and Ready? The EU Battlegroup Concept and the Nordic Battlegroup. URL: <http://www.sieps.se/en/publications/2006/armed-and-ready-the-eu-battlegroup-concept-and-the-nordic-battlegroup-20062/> (accessed: 23.04.2020).

universal category which has no distinctions in their races, material realities, gender and sexuality. In the meantime, the feminist foreign policy defines its' starting point from the acknowledgement of care as enlightenment, as the essential investment in every human being is the encouragement of consciousness – giving a person right to choose the “truths”, educate themselves to be able to see through to myths and contribute with their unique viewpoint on how to overcome the injustice.

Swedish example of feminist foreign policy does not participate in the global debates of “clashes of truths”. It creates the conditions. The architecture of these conditions are simple: the three Rs standing for Rights, Representation and Resources (MFA, 2019)¹¹ while its' effect on global empowerment and fight on gender injustice is tremendous. Moreover, the growth of interest among the “good states” could be explained by the political efficiency of this policy, as the further examples proves the “reasonable” pragmatism of these policies. Aggestam and Rosamond [2019a] argue that the employ of feminist foreign policy allows Sweden to “contribute” in Other femininities from a distance, as the gendered legislation complicated the entering requirements for women refugees; thus they are “empowered” during their stay in refugee camps on the Middle East.¹²

The presence of these examples encourages the feminist scholars to question the inconsistency within the policies of those who are bringing the peace, pacification and empowerment to every woman within and beyond the borders with warrior-like masculine military policies and exporting armament and weapons to the destinations of conflicts, where women and girls in the meantime are “protected” due to their “invisibility and powerlessness” to be involved and contribute to peacemaking. The complex nature of contemporary IR propagates the phenomenon of the dichotomy of protector and protected, as it is one of the most efficient political technologies employed by the global political elite to manipulate the public perception to justify their masculine practices. The discourse of crisis and “external enemy” is one of the several powerful rhetoric of manipulative populist politicians, as the artificially created conditions of fear and threat are the most suitable motives to drive the masses into the statement of irrationality and instincts. Henceforth, the political elite encourages its' people to re-evaluate their priorities, as “they are in war-time conditions” (whether a war with the state, terrorism or virus) when the gender regimes and roles are intensively propagated, as women are the most vulnerable category and needed to be protected, in return for keeping the distance from the decision-making of rational, strategist heroes. There are several examples of how the politicization of gender agenda “legitimize” the masculine political decisions. Firstly, the gender-just protection beyond the

¹¹ Canada, G.A. (2017). Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy [Online]. GAC. URL: https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng (accessed: 12.09.2021).

¹² Regeringskansliet (The Government of Sweden). Handbook Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy. URL: <https://www.government.se/reports/2018/08/handbook-swedens-feminist-foreign-policy/> (accessed: 20.04.2020).

border, as the warrior-like masculinity and gender regime of Russia causes a long term instability in the northern borders of the “civilized world” [Aggestam 2019]. However, some states are so “sensitive” to the issues of women and peace, that they are ready to embark a war on oppressors of girls and women – Bush was “so concerned” with the violence of Taliban against Afghan women that intervened in a 19-year long war to bring the peace and prosperity.

Conclusion

As the world entered the new era of political, economic and social relations, the agenda and instrument of the global political elite shifted from state-centric approaches developed in the severe years of the Cold-War, to ethical dialogue with emancipated Others. The “rebranded” relations provided opportunities to the ones oppressed to make their voices louder, while the ones expected to listen heard echoes of previous persecutions. The presence of these stories could not be “appropriate” to the image “gentle civilizers” and actors with “moral duties”, consequently the “good states” hear the voices fragmentarily. Analogously they implement their “emancipating”, “empowering” practices, as the close engagement with critical and feminist scholarships threatens their inclusive, competent and sustainable image. These actions consequence the marginalization and radicalization of the ideas that millions of women globally contributed to Academia, undermining exceptional instruments to understand the real experiences of billions of people and interpret the contemporary phenomenon suggesting the most efficient, inclusive and emancipating practices.

However, the pragmatic nature of IR demonstrated that the global political elite shows zero tolerance to dissidence, as the issues addressed by international institutions project only the “truths” of the “inner party” [Orwell 1948].

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 20.09.2021

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 18.10.2021

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 15.11.2021

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