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WOMEN AND SECURITY

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES AND ISSUES

Abstract

The article discusses the contrasts between the traditional conception of security and feminist viewpoints on the issue. It presents the traditional realist viewpoint on security and discusses the representation of women in state security structures as well as their representation in international organizations. It briefly presents feminist criticisms of liberal origin concerning the lack of equal participation and representation in these power structures that affect everyone regardless of gender. The second part of the paper is dedicated to the discussion of the important issues raised by feminist perspectives on security and the specificity of feminist security studies. The widening of the security studies area is portrayed, as present in these writings: the overvaluation of the importance of state structures, in which women are underrepresented; the importance of expanding 'security from the area of the state and applying it to communities; the decentering of dominant modes of knowledge (the "normal"); the inclusion of femininities, masculinities, and gender is security analyses; the importance of issues like #metoo international movement and the withdrawal of states in our region, East, South East and Central Europe, from the Istanbul Convention. The article concludes by asserting the importance of enhancing women solidarity in this region, including here the development of feminist security studies by applying it to common transborder issues.

This article is meant to present feminist perspectives on security, in contrast with the traditional way of looking at security, and pinpoint some important and relevant contemporary issues related to women's perspectives on security. There are at least two ways of looking at women in security. One that is originated in the traditional thought of realists, and perhaps liberals; the other one is related to constructivist views, including feminist views. A version of this article was presented at the conference webinar European Security and Intelligence: Gender and National Security, 3 April 2021, organized by INIS.

My perspective is a feminist one. I take 'feminism' to mean that conception according to which women are people; that conception according to which women are humans too. This is a definition that does not belong to me but there is no clear author of it. In history, in various cultures, women were either idealized, compared to angels, or demonized, even considered witches or evil creatures. Simone de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex*, discusses the idea that in Western cultural tradition, women were objectified by men writers and sometimes described as "angels", sometimes as "sirens" or "witches" (de Beauvoir, 1949). And in any case, they were always presented and described as something else than human beings. In Europe, in the Middle Ages, there was even an intellectual dispute as to whether women were human or not, the so-called *Querelle des Femmes*, or *Dispute about Women*. As Gisela Bock writes, the main question around which the Querelle was gravitating was "Are women people or not?" and it was accompanied by other questions, such as "Are women like men?" or "What are women?" (Bock, 2002)

Thus, defining feminism is that conception according to which women are people if we look at history. It makes sense because of the traditional ways of thinking of some contemporary people, including in Europe. The male standards applied in many aspects of life throughout centuries, rendered females' condition, performances, and certain particular ways of acting as odd, different and understandable by males. The first difference to be accepted, and possibly the most difficult to accept for males in any society is the difference between the two distinct sexes, with two different roles in reproduction. But society is not limited to reproduction. It is very diversified and the roles of men and women diversified accordingly throughout history and in various geographical areas. Thus, the notion of 'gender' captures the differences in terms of roles assumed by various segments of males and females, and in terms of roles attributed by various societies to them. Gender is about femininities and masculinities, about the evolution of these roles. In the last few years, the very notion of 'gender' has been under attack from the ultraconservative and traditionalist ranks. In these ultraconservative views, any other roles except reproduction and care are questioned.

The paper is structured in two parts. The first part is coming from a traditional realist view of security and is dedicated to looking at women's presence in security structures. Thus, in the first part, I document a low presence of women in security and defence areas, in state structures. The second part is referring to feminist perspectives in international relations, perspectives that are

challenging the implicit presuppositions that security issues manifest only at the level of state structures. A wider view of security is opening, as a result of certain evolution in security studies, but also as a result of the development of feminist security studies, as part of critical security studies. "[F]eminist perspectives on world politics entered the discipline at about the same time as the end of the Cold War" (Tickner, 2001). Thus, in terms of history, they are fairly recent.

1. Women and men in security and defence state structures

The traditional view of security comes from the realist paradigm of explaining international relations. It is focused on national security, on war and peace issues, on threats faced by states, with a particular accent on military defence against such threats. The very concept of 'security is part of the realist *Weltanschaung*, being viewed as state security. As Waltz writes, "[a]t a minimum, government exists to provide security to persons and their property" (Waltz, 2001: 89). However, alternative or complementary views on 'security have been proliferating in the post-Cold War period (Baylis, 2008).

'National security is the trademark of the realist school in international relations. Stephen Walt assumes the definition of Nye and Lynn-Jones (1988), writing that "security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use, and control of military force." (Walt, 1991: 212) He includes here statecraft, like arms control, diplomacy, crises management etc. Barry Buzan, perhaps the most influential researcher in the area of security, noted the ambiguity of the term 'security' and asserted that there are three levels of reference: individual, state, systemic (Buzan, 1984: 11). He extended the notion of security, to include five sectors: military, economic, political, societal, and environmental sectors (Buzan, 1991). Thus, the traditional view of security as state security understood in its military dimension is augmented with a wider sense of security, in which, besides states, individuals and communities are included; also, the societal dimension and threats are in view, among others. A critical viewpoint concerning Buzan's perspective and an alternative definition of security is the following: " Security is Science about the condition of state and processes within the state, specifically, condition and processes which enable normal functioning

of state and development (Todorović, Trifunović, 2020: 11). This definition falls within the realist paradigm.

If we adopt a realist view of security and defence, then we will look at the involvement of women in state structures meant to defend the state from foreign threats, and by extension to their presence in regional and international organizations. Ann Tickner explained, "international relations is a man's world, a world of power and conflict in which warfare is a privileged activity." (Tickner, 1988: 429) The presence of women and particularly women leaders in the areas of states security and defence is rather small. Given the traditional view of security, we will look at the presence of women: in-state structures related to managing and protecting the state against threats; in defence and security structures at the level of regional organizations, like EU[1]; in international negotiation delegations; in decision making in the security area.

The UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, celebrated its 20th anniversary in the Fall of 2020. It was a groundbreaking international agreement and document in the area of women and security. This resolution "for the first time recognised the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. It acknowledged the contributions women and girls make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and highlighted the importance of their equal and full participation, as active agents in peace and security" (UN Peace Keeping, WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY, 2019). Thus, the recognition of women's roles and contributions in these areas is fairly recent. The same goes for the impact on women of armed conflicts.

In Europe, EIGE's[2] sectoral brief, *Gender and Security*, analyzes at length the situation of European security as seen as protection from internal threats as well as from external threats. It focuses on the internal threats, emphasizing the following: "Women are continuously under-represented in security sector organisations, such as the police, the border police and the army, and in security-related professions, despite research suggesting that gender balance in higher positions,

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[1] The European Union may be seen either as a political entity that can be assimilated to a state or as a complex intergovernmental organization with very developed governance mechanisms. In the former case, EU may be seen as a confederative political entity with certain federative and consociational (Arendt Lijphart) features.
[2] European Institute for Gender Equality.

both in management and in operational roles, improves business performance." (EIGE Gender and Security, 2020: 7).

The initiative of a few women MEPs to celebrate 20 years since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, led to the development of a research project, named #shecurity, which gives ample data indicating the reduced involvement of women in these areas. According to #shecurity research, at the level of the European Union, currently, women make up about 11% of military staff. CSDP civilian missions involve 20% women and CSDP military missions involve no women whatsoever. Women are simply not in charge at the leadership level: 0 out of 17 positions. At the level of EU and G20 taken together, the average representation in the diplomatic corps lies at around 43%. Still, at the top, women only make up around 25% of ambassadors (#shecurity index, 2020).

The general conclusion of #shecurity researchers is that "[a]lthough women make up roughly half of the world's population, they remain largely underrepresented in the traditionally male-dominated domain of foreign and defence policy." The study reconfirms yet another well known empirical generalization in the field of gender studies: "the higher the rank, the lower the percentage of women" (#shecurity index, 2020).

This generalization gets more proof as we move to the UN level. However, a groundbreaking decision taken in 2014 should be noted: the first woman Force Commander, Major General Kristin Lund was appointed (Lorenzen, Tryggestad. 2014). Subsequently, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Major General Ingrid Gjerde of Norway as Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in early 2021 (United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2021). Major General Ingrid Gjerde is the only woman commander out of 12. Despite progress noticeable in the participation of women in peacekeeping, in January 2021, less than one-fifth of military experts on mission and staff officers were women and made up only 5.4 % of personnel in military units (UN News, Empowering women, 2021).

The discrepancy between the impact of international conflicts on women and their participation particularly in positions of decision is striking. In this sense, Federica Dall'Arche remarks the number of women involved in global efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and regulate small arms and light weapons (SALW) is "alarmingly small", even though the number of women involved in these efforts grew over the last decades. "Studies have shown

that women represent only 32 per cent of all participants in official arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament forums and that heads of delegations, as well as speakers in related events and conferences, are almost exclusively men." (Dall'Arche, SIPRI, 2020)

When we look at all these figures presented, referring to the participation of women in different security institutions and their low representation at top levels of decision, one obvious question sparks: Why would women be involved more? Why should they be coopted (more) in the ranks of leaders who decide? A look at the literature dedicated to analyzing the subject of women in security reveals that the objections to women's low presence in security structures come from a series of arguments: the importance of gender equality; the importance of women's presence and their representation; women's competence/merit; the efficiency argument (Women Leading Peace, 2015).

Concerning the latter argument, a groundbreaking study by UN Women and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies of Geneva (2016) analyzed peace negotiations between 1989 – 2014 and the result is relevant: women's participation, when influential, is positively correlated with agreements being reached and implemented. That means that if societies want more efficiency in reaching agreements and having them implemented, an effort ought to be made to involve more women as negotiating leaders. Another study published in 2018 confirmed these findings by analysing 82 peace agreements on 42 armed conflicts and demonstrating a "robust relationship between peace agreements with women signatories and peace durability." (Dall'Arche, 2020:7)

Among the explanation of women's reduced representation in the area of security, we may count the role of tradition and the segregation of occupations between men and women, which attribute domestic roles to women and protective roles to men. The same tradition represents a barrier when it comes to another cause discovered by researchers: women's participation in the public sphere, including in the area of security. An increase in women's participation in this sphere is pending upon a wider takeover of domestic activities, including care work, by men (husbands, partners etc). The attention paid to the space beyond the public sphere for explanations represents a good transition to the second part of this article, which focuses on the development of feminist perspectives on security. These perspectives put forward how does security look like from women's viewpoints.

2. Feminist approaches to security

The feminist perspective on security is a relatively new area of research, spanning about three decades or so. However, there is a wide feminist tradition of thinking about women's roles in the public space, including in security structures. There are at least two strands in feminist literature. One that focuses on the importance of gender balance in the public space, on reaching equal representation in the public space, in politics etc. This strand is inspired by liberal values and a liberal worldview, according to which equality of rights is fundamental. Applied to the security domain, this view focuses on a higher representation and presence of women in state security and defence areas. Another strand is represented by those authors and writings that pay particular attention to the consideration and appreciation of women's contribution to society in the very positions they already hold – be it in the private space or public space. Generally, women contribute to the everyday peace and security of families and this is an area not taken into consideration by mainstream researchers in the area of security. Concerning the political economy, Diane Elson discussed the phenomenon of ,male bias in structural adjustment'. She showed how this bias is manifested at threefold levels: (1) at the level of daily attitudes and actions, (2) at the level of theorizing the economy (for example, by taking for granted women's unpaid contribution to the economy), and (3) at the level of public policies. (Elson, 1995)

A common feature of the feminist writings on security is their appraisal that the mainstream theories of security suffer from an overvaluation of the importance of state structures, in which women are underrepresented. Fundamentally, feminist writings are redefining security to include areas not seen before by male writers. As Cynthia Enloe writes, "One result of feminists' insight is that they do not erect false barriers between the fields of "security studies" and "international political economy."[3] What does she mean by that? The fact that one cannot understand the issue of security, which includes women's security, without looking at the economy and the roles of migrant domestic servants, of women living on or near a military base, or of women who do

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[3] Cynthia Enloe 2014 Bananas, Beaches and Bases. Making Feminist Sense of International Politics. Second Edition. Completely Revised and Updated, university of california press,
Berkeley Los Angeles London p 353.

manual work for multinational companies. Enloe removes 'security from the area of the state and applies it to communities, to large groups of people.

Feminist thought in the area of security, defence, and peace research, decenter dominant modes of knowledge. The dominant and traditional view on security tends to look at security and defence in terms of state structures, but there is much more than that: there is a lot of violence, there are a lot of threats to women's integrity in their very homes. A feminist perspective on security includes domestic violence as a field to be investigated, as domestic violence affects primarily and overwhelmingly women and children. Therefore, it affects the security of considerable proportions of women and children in society. Security is a matter of the public and the domestic space. The consequences of domestic instability and insecurity are reflected in women's participation in the public space. The more insecure the domestic space, the less probable is a woman's involvement in politics, her participation in government (Milazzo, Goldstein: 2019). A feminist viewpoint will look not only at state violence but at various forms of violence affecting disproportionately women and men. To generalize, a feminist perspective on security will go beyond state structures and will look at how violence is gendered in the private space, affecting large communities.

Feminist research does not look at gender in binary terms but in a much more nuanced way. There are complex entanglements of femininities and masculinities in society, in everyday life, in a wide range of activities. "The key insights of feminist critiques of SS [security studies] highlight the role of the human subject (as opposed to a state-centric focus) and make clear the importance of identifying and interrogating dominant configurations of masculinity and femininity (and the binary understandings of gender that underpin this worldview)." (Khalid, 2018: 39) This way, many phenomena may be understood – from domestic violence having males as victims to aggressive and competitive behaviour of certain segments of women on the labour market.

Feminist research uncovers gendered structures and discourses internalized as "normal". For example, it is "normal" to have women migrants who take care of our children (perspective from a middle-class couple in some European countries); it is "normal" to have a man boss and women subordinated (and it is "abnormal" the other way round); it is "normal" to have sex workers or women available for sex in the proximity of military bases (example inspired by Cynthia Enloe's writing, 2014). Feminist approaches in this strand uncover existing power

relations that define masculinist/ patriarchal values as "universal." As mentioned in the first part of this paper, as a result of the history and society's evolution, males tend to be considered the standard, and females are considered to be in need to adjust to the standard.

Feminist Security Studies is an area that exploded in the second decade of the new millennium. Thus, at the 2011 International Studies Association in Montreal, almost half of the 46 panels sponsored by the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section consisted of feminist security studies (Prugl, 2011). This massive development may in itself be a subject of further investigation. It is clear, however, that the traditional paradigm, presented in the first part of this paper, referring to national security is not sufficient, it is not adequate to address multiple challenges faced by women in the world, who represent half of the world population.

If we look at the way security strategies of various countries are framed, we see an exclusive preoccupation with state interests and everything that derives from this perspective. Take, for example, the National Security Strategy of the USA (NSS, 2017 – the last produced so far by an administration). Its content is revealing in terms of the focus on state security and its four pillars: I. Protect the American People, the Homeland, and the American Way of Life, II. Promote American Prosperity, III. Preserve Peace through Strength, IV. Advance American Influence (The National Security Strategy of the USA, 2017). It is about national security, it is about the survival of the state, about its prosperity, it is about keeping the USA as a state high up in the world. It is not about the security of various segments of the people living within its territory. From a feminist security viewpoint, this is not enough, because there are various communities inside the USA which are not secure, large groups of people who are threatened in their livelihood that the NSS does not cater for. And it is not only about women here. As Nobel Prize laureate, Amartya Sen was pointing out in his Development as Freedom book in 1999, there are large segments of men living for example in the Bronx or Harlem, whose life expectancy is well below the life expectations of men coming from many countries, labelled as 'developing countries' (Sen, 1999). The same situation in terms of security policies and strategies goes for most if not all countries in the world. Feminist security perspectives are challenging this way of looking at security.

Even though security strategies continue to be framed around the state national security concept, the attention of many researchers and policymakers is drawn in other directions as well, they look at communities, gender biases, and the like. For example, this update on women, peace,

and security bring news about the femicide phenomenon in Mexic, the exclusion of women in peace talks in Afghanistan, the withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) which exposes Turkish women to violence and abuse, etc (The Women, Peace, and Security Update, 2021). All these are concerns that do not fall under the 'national security domain. Still, if we look at the proportions of the phenomenon of withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in our region, we realize how wide an impact it has upon women living in our region, for that matter – East-South-East and Central Europe. It endangers from the state level the lives and livelihood of large segments of the population, who are more prone to be subject to violence, including domestic violence. Less than two months ago, the Polish parliament voted to send a bill called "Yes to Family, No to Gender" to parliamentary committees for examination (Amiel, 2021). The relevance of feminist security studies is well exemplified by this situation.

The #metoo movement that developed starting in 2017 and developed as a worldwide movement is also a phenomenon that according to the feminist security perspective falls into the area of security, seen as a phenomenon that endangers the security of women using sexual harassment and sexual abuse worldwide. This is a phenomenon that is still needed to be studied as a security subject. It grew into an international movement, it fostered international solidarity among women. This might be seen as a phenomenon that epitomizes very well the formula Cynthia Enloe coined a few years ago, "the international is personal" and "the personal is international" (Enloe, 2014: 350-351) with a twist. In Enloe's understanding: "The international is personal" implies that governments depend on certain kinds of allegedly private relationships to conduct their foreign affairs" (Enloe, 2014: 351). This sense is perfectly applicable to the withdrawal of states from the Istanbul Convention situation in our region, to the extent that governments need women to be quiet, submissive, they need them to bear and give birth to children, do their domestic jobs without complaining of domestic violence or sexual abuse so that the governments could carry on with their politics and foreign policy as usual.

3. Conclusions

Two strands of looking at security were presented in this article. One which is traditional and is focused on national security, state security, and defence structures. The other strand is rather recent, fundamentally starting with the end of the Cold War, and represents a feminist understanding applied to international relations and security. The feminist strand is not monolithic. As Laura Sjoberg is writing, "there is not just one feminist perspective on security, but many [...] What they [different feminist approaches] share, however, is an interest in revealing and redressing gender subordination in global politics." (Sjoberg, 2012) Within the traditional view of security, the feminist perspectives stress the importance of giving more access to women to decision making levels, to participation in security operations and negotiations. Within the second strand of thinking security, from feminist perspectives, a whole array of new issues become part of security concerns and the security domain. The understanding of security widens considerably, the personal becomes international. The two strands and the progress in terms of policies and their implementation reinforce each other. Wider participation of women in state security structures may contribute to a widening of the concept of security at the state level, may contribute to an increase in the state preoccupation with countering threats that are not targeting the whole nation, the whole state, but which are rendering vulnerable large communities.

The development of feminist security studies challenges traditional ways of looking at threats. The threats are seen in a wider perspective and are not only limited to state borders' and state interests' threats. As seen with the #metoo social movement, there are transborder threats that affect wide segments of women internationally. The same goes for the case of the withdrawal of countries from the Istanbul Convention, and in this case, the regional impact is extremely important to the extent that it leaves women in the region very vulnerable in their very private spaces. Thus, "the personal is international", to use Cynthia Enloe's expression, is a very valuable way of analyzing the situation. From this viewpoint, feminist security studies have an added value in the field of security studies. Even more so, because "feminist methodologies can promote responsible and legitimate theory pluralism by making the variety of discourses more reflective of their normative assumptions and political commitments, thus exposing bias and reconceptualizing political agenda." (Hudson, 2011: 45)

Developing feminist security studies in the Eastern and South-Eastern region[4] is an important step towards rendering governments more aware of the threats faced by women which are different from the threats faced by men. The gendering of security studies is an important ingredient in developing more gender-aware and gender-sensitive policies, at the state level, at regional, European and international levels.

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[4] This is the reason why in 2020 as a result of a conference held in Bucharest, at the NationalUniversity for Political and Administrative Studies (SNSPA) was set up the Eastern and South-Eastern Europe Fanel Network of women experts in international relations http://esee-fanel.net/ , https://www.facebook.com/ESEE.Fanel

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