

UDC 327

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PEACE DIPLOMACY: ADVANCEMENT AND CHALLENGES

N. I. DROZD^a

^aBelarusian State University, 4 Niezaliežnasci Avenue, Minsk 220030, Belarus

We consider the role of women in strengthening of international peace and security. Specifically, we examine how this role has evolved in history and is performed at present. There is abundant evidence to show that a gender-inclusive and well-integrated peace process increases the probability of lasting peace. In light of this evidence, we present an argument for more extensive involvement of women in peace diplomacy as politicians and diplomats.

Keywords: peace diplomacy; negotiations; peacebuilding; peaceful settlement; conflict resolution; UN; UNSCR 1325; women, peace and security agenda; national action plan; OSCE; security sector.

РОЛЬ ЖЕНЩИН В МИРНОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИИ: ДОСТИЖЕНИЯ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ

Н. И. ДРОЗД¹⁾

¹⁾Белорусский государственный университет, пр. Независимости, 4, 22030, г. Минск, Беларусь

Изучается роль женщин в укреплении международного мира и безопасности. Анализируются эволюция и степень участия женщин в процессах миростроительства. Как показывают многочисленные исследования, гендерно-инклюзивные и интегрированные мирные процессы повышают вероятность успешных переговоров по мирному урегулированию и таким образом увеличивают шансы на достижение устойчивого мира и стабильности в зонах вооруженных конфликтов. В этом контексте эффективное вовлечение женщин-политиков и дипломатов в практику мирной дипломатии в условиях конфликта имеет решающее значение.

Ключевые слова: мирная дипломатия; переговоры; миростроительство; мирное урегулирование; урегулирование конфликтов; ООН; Резолюция Совета Безопасности ООН № 1325; повестка дня «Женщины, мир, безопасность»; национальный план действий; ОБСЕ; сектор безопасности.

Образец цитирования:

Дрозд НИ. Роль женщин в мирной дипломатии: достижения и проблемы. *Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. Международные отношения*. 2022;2: 3–7 (на англ.).
<https://doi.org/10.33581/2521-6848-2022-2-3-7>

For citation:

Drozdn NI. The role of women in peace diplomacy: advancement and challenges. *Journal of the Belarusian State University. International Relations*. 2022;2:3–7.
<https://doi.org/10.33581/2521-6848-2022-2-3-7>

Автор:

Наталья Ивановна Дрозд — кандидат филологических наук, доцент; профессор кафедры международных отношений факультета международных отношений, Чрезвычайный и полномочный посол Республики Беларусь.

Author:

Natalya I. Drozd, PhD (philology), docent; professor at the department of international relations, faculty of international relations, Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus.
natalya.drozdn@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5383-6715>

Introduction

Recent international developments have exacerbated multiple threats to global and regional security, including social and political instability, health insecurity, displacement, climate change and humanitarian crises. They have also drawn attention to women's participation in foreign affairs as a strategy for building of international peace and security.

Women face elevated risks to their safety and livelihoods in violent conflicts. They are also more vulner-

able to the negative consequences of foreign policy decisions, especially during economic, environmental or health crises, including the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

The potential of women to contribute to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and crises can no longer be neglected. Gender-inclusive peace processes and addressing the under-representation of women in leadership positions in peace diplomacy are being proposed as prospective areas of progress.

International instruments for women's inclusion in peace diplomacy

For generations, women have been pushing for a greater role in peace diplomacy. As early as 400 BC, the Greek poet Aristophanes in his famous comedy "Lysistrata" portrayed a group of women with outstanding diplomatic skills. When their husbands failed to stop the Peloponnesian War, their wives took their place. They successfully negotiated the terms of the peace and restored national unity in the process. World history offers numerous examples of successful peacemaking by women.

In the face of persistent male domination in foreign policy and diplomacy, women have pressed for more equal representation in building peace and stability. In 1915, women from all over Europe met in the Hague (Netherlands) to protest against the war and advocate for women's participation in peace and security. That historical meeting gave rise to a women's congress that dedicated itself to building mechanisms for mediation that would end World War I and address its root causes. The congress was subsequently renamed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The league has since served as a platform for opposing wars and armed conflicts and a vehicle for involving women in peace and security.

The international community has evolved a battery of instruments and procedures to make women integral stakeholders in peacebuilding and take their concerns, perspectives, and capabilities into account. The United Nations mechanisms include the UN Commission on the status of women (CSW), Declaration on the protection of women and children in emergency and armed conflict of 1974, UN world conferences on women of 1975, 1980, 1985, 1995, Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women of 1979, often called "the international bill of rights for women", etc. As a deputy chair of the CSW from the European block of countries during the 4th World conference on women in Beijing (1995), I encountered a large number of dedicated women activists from different continents who worked hard on behalf of the world's women

for the recognition of their essential role in peace and development.

To keep the momentum of the Beijing declaration and platform for action going, a special session of the UN General Assembly was convened in 2000. It was titled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". The key message of the outcome document was a call for women's full participation in peace diplomacy at all levels. As a follow-up to the session, the UN Secretary-General created an ad hoc panel of experts to review UN peace and security activities. The panel's report on UN peace support operations acknowledged the need for equal representation of men and women, notably in leadership positions. The Windhoek declaration – based on the report's findings – called for gender mainstreaming in UN peace support operations, including equal access and representation of women and the advancement of women to leadership positions. The UN Security Council adopted in 2000 the landmark resolution 1325, on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325)¹, underlining the decisive role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding, and maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It also encouraged the national-level implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, including through national action plans (NAPs), national-level strategic documents outlining objectives and activities that countries take to secure the human rights of women and girls in conflict settings and ensure meaningful participation of women in peace and security. Some 98 countries have developed NAPs for the implementation of the WPS agenda². Numerous countries have also developed third-, and even fourth-generation NAPs, building on the work and lessons learned from previous plans. Frequently, NAPs are aligned with national sustainable development agendas, gender equality policies, and other relevant policy frameworks. However, countries take very different approaches to NAPs planning, development and implementation. NAPs differ

¹Resolution 1325 (2000) adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting on 31 October 2000 [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000)) (date of access: 30.08.2022).

²Women and peace and security: report of the Secretary-General [Electronic resource]. Para 80. URL: <https://undocs.org/S/2021/827> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

in goals, timelines, topics and, most importantly, in allocated budgets. Only 35 countries to date have allocated budgets to their NAPs, according to the UN³.

Since UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council has adopted nine additional resolutions reaffirming the role of women in peacekeeping⁴, further advancing gender mainstreaming in UN peacekeeping. Women have joined the UN military, police and civilian peacekeeping missions in growing numbers. From 1993 to 2000, the share of women in the UN peace force grew from 1 % to 4.8 % in the UN military and 10.9 % in the UN police forces. Women are serving the local populations in conflict zones in leadership positions and also as military observers, staff officers, and military personnel⁵.

Women's presence in UN senior leadership positions has also improved. In January 2022, UN Secretary-General A. Guterres appointed E. Spehar from Canada to the position of assistant Secretary-General for peacebuilding support in the department of political and peacebuilding affairs. Seven distinguished women have served with distinction as special representatives of the UN Secretary-General, notably, V. Gamba de Potgieter (Argentina), D. Lyons (Canada), B. Keita (Guinea), C. Ziadeh (Lebanon), H. Ruth Meagher La Lime (Mauritius), N. Gherman (Moldova), J. Antoinette Hennis-Plasschaer (Netherlands). Major General K. Lund of Norway participated in the peace process in Cyprus as the first female commander of the UN Peacekeeping Force there. Her example has inspired many more women to become involved in peace diplomacy. During her tenure, women represented over 75 % of the force's designated officials and about half the leadership group⁶. Women's NGOs deserve acknowledgement for their work in conflict zones and their role as facilitators in peace negotiations. According to UN Women, a peace settlement is 64 % less likely to be jeopardised if an NGO, including a women's group, had participated in its negotiation [1].

Outside the UN, the international community's effort to bring more women into peace-building has also targeted the OSCE, one of the world's most prominent regional security organisations with a mandate to build sustainable peace and economic prosperity in the OSCE region. The OSCE's integrated approach to building security includes full integration of women in peace di-

plomacy at all stages of the conflict cycle. All 57 participating states of the OSCE are bound by UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda. Both serve as essential mechanisms to guarantee that women can bring their multifaceted talents and versatile capabilities – including in peace diplomacy – to peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction, in day-to-day political and military operations in conflict and post-conflict situations inclusive. Since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, the OSCE has facilitated the WPS agenda among its participating states and encouraged them to enhance the role of women in the security sector as some of its key priorities and key constituents of its comprehensive security approach. Tools such as the focal point network are already in place across its executive structures, including field missions. To date, more than 73 % of the OSCE participating states (43 out of 57) have developed NAPs for implementing the WPS agenda. The organisation has named the advancement of women in the security sector as a top priority for field operations.

However, women's capacity for participation in OSCE-led peace negotiations remains under-utilised [2, p. 12]. The OSCE has mediated three unresolved conflicts: in the Transdniestrian region (as a part of the 5 + 2 talks), in and around Nagorno-Karabakh (as a participant in the Minsk process), and in Georgia, as a part of the Geneva international discussions launched in August 2008. All three efforts at mediation have virtually excluded women. Through my work in senior positions in OSCE field operations in the Western Balkans and Central Asia, I have encountered many women with impressive talent and capabilities for preventive diplomacy, peaceful conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery, which should definitely be used in the OSCE's work on peace diplomacy.

Nevertheless, the OSCE leadership has made a significant effort to give strategic and practical guidance to the participating states on gender in international relations, including through the relevant Ministerial Council decisions, the 2004 OSCE Action plan for the promotion of gender equality, the OSCE Guide on gender-sensitive mediation (2017). However, translating these valuable documents into reality will require political will and enhanced budgeting capacity from the OSCE participating states.

Challenges and barriers to gender-inclusive peace diplomacy

Despite the existence of a range of international mechanisms for women's participation in peacebuilding, and the extensive opportunities that they open,

significant gaps remain. According to UN Women, from 1992 to 2019, women numbered on average only 13 % of negotiators, 6 % of mediators, and 6 % of signatories

³National action plans: at a glance. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPE) [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

⁴Global norms and standards: peace and security [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/global-norms-and-standards> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

⁵Women in peacekeeping [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping/> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

⁶New policy brief by Kristin Lund: reflections from the first female force commander in UN history [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.prio.org/news/2629> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

to major peace agreements⁷. One barrier to the participation of women leaders in peace negotiations could be the influence of gender and cultural stereotypes and prejudices affecting perceptions of women's competence and professionalism. Documentation from several peace negotiations suggests that women's groups seeking a place at the negotiating table face multiple challenges to their credibility, competence and qualifications. Conflicts impact women's daily lives differently from men's, and women's negotiation strategies emphasise consensus building. More often than men, women show opposition to violence by advocating peaceful solutions centred on reconciliation, education, socio-economic development, and the root causes of the conflict. During violent conflicts – often accompanied by sexual and gender-based violence – women tend to be more connected to their communities, which puts them in a better position than men to mediate conflicts⁸. A frequent barrier to women's participation in peacebuilding is traditional inequalities and discriminatory power structures, as in Afghanistan⁹. Lack of experience and training in mediation and monitoring and evaluation of the post-conflict gender agenda also presents difficulties for women's peace groups and movements, especially at the local level.

Too often, official delegations negotiating the resolution of armed conflicts have very few women. Yet, despite the lack of official recognition of their input,

women still play prominent roles in the peace process in their countries. They act as advisers to official negotiators, build grassroots support by acting as observers, taking part in consultations, participating in commissions, and enhancing their skills at problem-solving, mediation and monitoring by attending workshops. In places as diverse as Congo, Libya, Israel-Palestine, Sudan, Mali, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Ukraine, women were largely excluded from formal negotiations on peace¹⁰. Examples of women leading peace negotiation teams are indeed scarce. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, T. Livni served as Israel's lead negotiator in several rounds from 2007 to 2014, and H. Ashrawi was the lead negotiator for the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the 1990s. In Libya, no woman participated in the formal peace negotiation. However, after a 2020 UN campaign for engaging women in peacebuilding, women came to number 23 % of the negotiators from the UN-funded Libyan forum for political dialogue, a significant improvement from the past years¹¹.

In a recent meeting with women activists in June 2022, the UN Secretary-General A. Guterres welcomed the participation of women in negotiating the South Sudan's historic Juba independence agreement, the settlement in Sudanese Darfur, the peace talks in the Central African Republic, and Mali. He hailed the meetings of women from the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus that helped expand dialogue and build trust¹².

Conclusion

Despite considerable progress in engaging women as direct and equal partners in the peace process, success is still elusive, and the gender perspective is still not reflected in most peace agreements. Women's skills and capabilities at securing peace, dialogue and mediation – which they have displayed over centuries – remain under-utilised.

Harnessing this peace-building potential of women is essential. Women contribute a unique perspective to peace negotiations by emphasising mediation and problem-solving. Historical evidence suggests peace agreements are 35 % more likely to last longer than 15 years if women participated in negotiating its terms¹³.

International relations – including peace diplomacy – remain a largely male-dominated area. However,

it is also undeniable that women leaders across countries and regions have been pushing for a new kind of diplomacy, in which men and women are represented more equitably based on their merits and strengths, as evidenced by the growing number of women heads of state, prime ministers, and foreign ministers. All of this gives reason to hope that eventually, women will put their talents as diplomats and negotiators to good use and add a uniquely female perspective to the search for global peace and stability.

Belarus has achieved a high level of gender equality. According to the 2019 UN Human development report, it ranks among the world's 22 countries with the human development index for women equal to or higher than for men. Belarus takes 27th place out of 162¹⁴ by its gender

⁷Women and peace and security: report of the Secretary-General [Electronic resource]. Para 15. URL: <https://undocs.org/S/2021/827> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

⁸Ibid. Para 37.

⁹Women and peace and security: report of the Secretary-General [Electronic resource]. Para 4. URL: <https://undocs.org/S/2021/827> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

¹⁰Women's participation in major peace processes [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

¹¹Women's participation in major peace processes 1992–2019, explore the data. Case study [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

¹²António Guterres (UN Secretary-General) on women and peace and security. Security Council, 9064th meeting [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k14/k149o9fdsb> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

¹³Women's participation and a better understanding of politics [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://wps.unwomen.org/pdf/CH03.pdf> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

¹⁴Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: inequalities in human development in the 21st century: Human development report 2019 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2019> (date of access: 30.08.2022).

equality index. Women's proactive role in facilitating progress on the UN sustainable development goals (SDG) – including SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions – contributes to Belarus' performance in the global rankings. Belarusian women are in a good position to contribute to international peace diplomacy to raise the status of women in the world and strengthen global peace and security.

As shown in this paper, women are still poorly represented in formal peace negotiations, despite the abundance of theoretical and practical arguments in favour of women's participation in peace diplomacy. International and national decision-makers should empower women to contribute to peace-building by creating appropriate legal frameworks, removing institutional barriers and addressing deep-rooted discriminatory stereotypes.

UN member states should concentrate on meeting their commitments under UNSCR 1325 as a priority. They should also take steps to develop and implement national action plans for implementing the WPS agenda. International and national efforts should also address inadequate funding for capacity-building programmes for women, supported by governments and NGOs. Clear official commitments on nominating and appointing women to key negotiating positions would be a helpful measure. Negotiating parties should be encouraged to include women leaders in their official delegations. Local women's organisations should be consulted at different stages of the peace negotiations, and parties should be encouraged to incorporate the gender perspective in the texts of the peace agreements to increase their long-term viability.

References

1. Desirée N. Anchoring the peace: civil society actors in peace accords and durable peace. *International Interactions*. 2012; 38(2):243–266. DOI:10.1080/03050629.2012.659139.
2. Avonius L, Jaarva MM, Schmidt U, Wohl T. Inclusion of women and effective peace processes: a toolkit [Internet; cited 2022 August 30]. Available from: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/440735>.

Received by editorial board 12.10.2022.