

Karin Aggestam and Ann E. Towns: Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiations.

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Editors Karin Aggestam and Ann Towns offer a compelling and in many ways pioneering analysis of the position of women in diplomacy and in international negotiations, and how the practices and norms in diplomacy are gendered. To date, the research of both descriptive and substantive representation of women in diplomacy has been very limited and this volume makes an important contribution to addressing this gap.

The editors are both experts on gender in foreign policy. Karin Aggestam is professor of political science and holds the Samuel Pufendorf Endowed Chair at Lund University. She is also a visiting research professor at Monash University and honorary professor at the University of Queensland, Australia. Ann Towns is an associate professor in political science at the University of Gothenburg and a Wallenberg Academy Fellow. She leads a research project on gender norms, practices and hierarchies in diplomacy. This volume is particularly valuable in terms of the effort made by the editors to step outside Europe and North America and draw in examples from other parts of the world. The result is that they bring together original contributions from a diverse range of International Relations scholars.

Using case studies of specific countries and international negotiations, the contributing authors in this book address three main research questions: 1. Where are women in diplomacy located and positioned? 2. To what extent and how are diplomatic practices and norms gendered? 3. How does the practice in diplomacy change with a broader and more diverse group of diplomats?

The book is structured in two parts. The first part focuses on Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and primarily addresses the first question, drawing on examples of women's representation in diplomacy from the USA, Sweden, Turkey, Japan, and Brazil. The second part focuses on international negotiations. Here, women as negotiators and their possible impact are tracked using examples of peace negotiations in Israel, the UN, the Council of the EU, and the former Soviet Union.

Diplomacy has been and arguably still is a strongly male dominated area where women are generally underrepresented, especially at a higher level. It is not surprising that, in terms of women's representation at MFAs, diplomacy shows clear patterns of both vertical and horizontal gender segregation, with less women in higher positions and also in posts that are considered more prestigious. The volume provides strong evidence of a striking pattern of women in support positions and men in core functions across the countries examined.

In their analysis, the authors make an important distinction between the descriptive and the substantive representation of women. Whereas descriptive representation refers simply to counting, substantive representation implies a certain influence over the policy agenda, especially in the area of promoting gender equality.

In their opening chapter "Where Are the Female Ambassadors? Gender and Status Hierarchies in Ambassador Postings", Aggestam and Niklasson address the descriptive representation of women. Using a unique set of data from 2014, they show that out of 7000 ambassadors from the top 50 highest GDP states, only 15% were women. To illustrate that not all postings are equal but that there is, in fact, a hierarchy between different posts in diplomacy, and to differentiate between them in this respect, they use

the category of “prestige”. The authors work on the assumption that the most prestigious posts are those situated in the most economically and militarily powerful countries. While they consider the assumption “unproblematic”, it is worth noting that it is reflective of the hierarchy within an ultimately patriarchal and strongly gendered system.

In their closing remarks, Aggestam and Towns briefly outline the history of women’s participation in diplomacy. Whereas from the 16th to the 18th century, it was not uncommon for women with links to the royal courts to take on a role in diplomacy, both formal and informal, in the 19th and especially the 20th century, with the professionalization of diplomacy and its shift towards MFAs, women were deliberately prevented from joining this profession. The analyses of MFAs from different parts of the world suggest that women first joined the Foreign Service in the first half of the 20th century and that the ban on married women serving as diplomats was lifted in some countries in the late 60s or early 70s. In the US, for a long time only white males were considered appropriate candidates for diplomatic positions, and until 1971 there was an unwritten rule that prevented married women from serving as diplomats (Bashevkin: 47). Brazil lifted its prohibition on women diplomats only in 1954 (de Souza Farias – do Carmo: 110). Turkey never introduced a formal marriage ban in regard to diplomatic positions but the lack of family friendly policies arguably kept women away from this profession (Rumelili – Suleymanoglu-Kurum: 91).

As Aggestam and Towns rightly point out, the main role for women in diplomacy in the 20th century was that of the “diplomatic wife”. Modern diplomacy was built on a specific model of a heterosexual relationship where the woman serves as a mediator of informal diplomacy: as a host, she provides an environment in which her husband, the diplomat, can build relationships with his counterparts. As in other areas of society, women were pushed into the private sphere, deprived of their own income and formally and informally prevented from entering the public sphere, and official, and paid, posts in diplomacy.

Even though we still live in the aftermath of this model, there has been a clear shift in diplomacy, perhaps triggered by greater diversity, in terms of focussing also on the needs of the diplomatic spouse. It is excellent that this volume reflects on the fight for recognition and regulation of the work of “diplomatic wives” and includes the “private sphere” in the analysis as these factors clearly play an important role in the representation of women in diplomacy and their decision-making. In the case of Sweden, we can see that issues such as spouses’ employability and retirement pension entitlement, which enable them to maintain a level of financial independence, had been addressed as early as 1970 (Niklasson – Robertson: 75). On the other hand, in 2014, Brazil still did not provide any policy or support that would enable diplomats’ spouses to find employment. Furthermore, the authors of the chapter on Brazil link the low representation of women in the Brazilian diplomatic service to the emphasis placed on women as carers in Brazilian society (de Souza Farias – do Carmo: 120).

If there are only a few women in diplomacy, there are even fewer women engaged in peace negotiations. In her chapter on this topic, Paffenholz notes that women’s participation in peace processes remains one of the most unfulfilled aspects of the UN women, peace and security agenda. The author argues that the UN Resolution 1325 (and the follow-up Resolutions 1889 and 2522) constitute a real breakthrough in the focus on women’s participation in peace negotiations. She also observes a recent shift from “counting women to making women count”. Although gender quotas have proved effective in increasing women’s representation, they have not necessarily increased their influence at the negotiation table.

Another possible explanation of the low representation of women in peace negotiations suggests that crisis or emergency settings may give rise to an institutional preference to forgo formal structures. Gender roles in times of conflict tend to be more polarized and

are used to “legitimize” the overrepresentation of men, as the military is associated with a certain type of masculinity. Aggestam and Towns argue in the concluding chapter that many diplomatic activities take place in homosocial environments dominated by men and that some are even informal or confidential. This lack of structure and transparency in peace negotiations as well as unofficial male networks contributes to the fact that women are strongly underrepresented in peace negotiations. Also, on the example of east-west negotiations after the fall of the Soviet Union, Svedberg shows that both the west and the Soviet negotiation teams were male only and that being male was the main condition for entering the negotiation. Men were considered superior and leadership, as such, was seen as a masculine quality.

Women are also systematically underrepresented in the EU Council. Naurin and Naurin bring an original analysis of the descriptive representation of women in EU committees and working groups. They found a surprising result: that the new member states (those of the 2004 and later accessions) actually send more women than the “old” member states. A less surprising finding of their study is that there are fewer women in higher-level committees and “hard” areas such as CSDP or JHA. It is not clear whether this horizontal segregation is a result of self-selection or of a gendered institutional structure, and the authors call for further research into this. Similarly counter-intuitive results challenging the overall pattern come from Japan. Flowers shows that whereas the number of women in the Japanese MFA is very low as less than 10% of the ambassadors are female, over 50% of the members of Japanese delegations to the UN are women. Again, it is a subject for further research to provide an explanation why.

The second research question asks to what extent and how practices in diplomacy are gendered. The volume offers some overarching narratives that apply to diplomacy in general, which are supplemented by the anecdotal evidence dispersed through the various national case studies. Diplomacy as an institution is not organized in a manner that facilitates work-life balance and dual-career relationships. This is more damaging to women than to men. Aggestam and Towns suggest that robust parental leave policies and childcare provisions are needed in diplomacy. The institutional culture also needs to change. It would, for instance, benefit from increased participation of fathers in the care of children or less emphasis being placed on long working hours. The experience from Turkey suggests that in high positions, hegemonic masculinity still prevails and women need to adapt to masculine norms in order to advance their careers. There is also a hesitancy to put women at risk in violent contexts, and fears that women cannot network effectively in a male-dominated environment. In Brazil, where strongly traditional gender roles prevail in society, there is a view that women should not pursue demanding careers that compromise their role as mothers.

Women in diplomacy are significantly underrepresented but the numbers are growing. Sweden, for example, has reached gender parity and in 2014, women dominated some political units at the MFA. The third research question in this book asks what effect the increased diversity has on the practices in diplomacy. This is probably the area where further research is needed the most. For instance, the initial research suggests a correlation between a higher representation of women in peace negotiations and sustainability of peace. However, as the authors rightly note, much more research is needed to corroborate such a result.

This book addresses the gap in research on the important questions of not only how many, but where exactly women are positioned in diplomacy, and exactly what roles they take on. Its main strength and contribution is that it opens a new field of research and brings data from different parts of the world. Because it is a pioneering research, there are many more related areas that need further research, and the editors identify a number of these themselves. For example, it would have been welcome if the case studies had included an African country. Also, it would be very interesting to secure a dataset on the

numbers of women in diplomacy from a longer period of time so as to be able to monitor trends in development. However, researchers in this field often face challenges in securing primary data for their analysis so their options are, understandably, limited.

This excellent book would be of interest to scholars in the areas of international relations, diplomacy and gender studies as well as practitioners of diplomacy and international negotiations.

Jarka Devine Mildorf