



AP R2P

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SPOTLIGHT ON R2P

Women in International Security Next Generation Symposium

In November this year, APR2P PhD fellows Shannon Zimmerman and Luisa Ryan were flown to Washington, D.C. to participate in the inaugural Women in International Security's Next Generation Symposium. Selected from over 900 applications, this was an exceptional opportunity for our fellows to broaden their thinking on gender and security issues, and to test their ideas with experts in the field. They presented their research on the future of UN peacekeeping operations to an eminent panel, received feedback on their work, and made global connections for future collaboration.

Created to meet the challenge

of the underrepresentation of women in the international security sector, Women in International Security (WIIS, pronounced 'wise') is seeking to broaden and reframe their agenda to be more inclusive. Rather than specifically addressing the role of women, WIIS is applying a 'women and gender' lens to highlight the often hidden importance of femininities, masculinities and the relationship between the two within the security field. Security issues may affect women and men, girls and boys differently, and so it is crucial to have a nuanced approach to the very complex security challenges the global community is currently facing.

Part of this initiative has been to gather emerging leaders together through the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Gender, Peace and Security (GPS) Next Generation Symposium. The Symposium was designed to advance participants' knowledge about the gender dimensions of important and complex international security challenges, and build a community of international security experts that is more diverse and knowledgeable about these issues. The 27 selected participants came from every region of the world, and represented a wide array of experiences and backgrounds.

Participants presented their research on the forefront of the gender and security nexus. They were truly innovative, and represented the interplay of multiple factors, going beyond the binary of gender and security to include migration, economics, religion, and non-democratic environments. Topics included the role of women in violent extremism; gender and the sectarian conflict in Afghanistan/Pakistan; Refugees and SGBV and refugees and conflict management. Luisa Ryan presented her work on the impact of the Force Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Shannon Zimmerman presented her current work on the impact of counter-terrorism strategies on how peace operations protects civilians in conflict. They asked both the other participants and their panel discussants to suggest ways in which they could holistically incorporate gender into their studies. Our fellows seek to go beyond merely counting female peacekeepers or instances of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and figure out a way to include gender in a crosscutting, meaningful and actionable way.



Our fellows were extremely fortunate to have a very distinguished panel as their discussants. Providing feedback on their research were: Paul Williams (George

Washington University); Aditi Gorur (Stimson Center) and Sarah Williamson (Protect the People). As leaders in the field of analyzing peacekeeping, the panel challenged our fellows to think harder about why their research was new, the role of masculinities and femininities in their work, tension between the protection of civilian and women, peace and security agendas, and what their work could contribute to the conceptualization of peace operations in the future. Shannon and Luisa hope to stay in touch with their discussants, and to benefit from further feedback in the future.



Research exchange was just one aspect of the symposium, however. WIIS also arranged for participants to receive expert training in media and managing stressful situations. The media component was very practical for those participants who regularly discuss their cutting edge research in international fora, as it covered how to avoid being drawn into conversations outside of your field of expertise, and how to “own” an interview so that you make the most relevant points possible. The media training was particularly relevant to America-based participants, and the symposium discussed the different challenges women or people from ethnic,

religious or racial minorities may face when trying to communicate their message. For example, some strategies that may work for white, male presenters – such as sharing an emotional story to connect with the audience – may unfortunately detract from the credibility of a women presenter, depending on context. These issues were unfamiliar to some symposium participants, and so the discussion and opportunity to practice techniques while being filmed provided new insight into research presentation.



Another unique opportunity afforded by the symposium was the chance for Next Generation participants to meet with US Senate staffers. APR2P fellows met with relevant staff from the offices of Senator Flake (Arizona) and Senator Gillibrand (New York). These senators were chosen for their interest in the military, gender, Foreign Affairs and African Affairs, which are all particularly relevant to UN peacekeeping operations. Shannon and Luisa, along with other Symposium colleagues, talked about their own international experiences, and discussed their research and recommendations with the Senators’ staff. As the meetings coincided

with the recent Vancouver conference on peacekeeping contributions, these discussions were especially relevant.

While meeting with US senators' staff may not seem to directly relate to the work of an international cohort, it was an amazing opportunity. It provided a unique window into how foreign policy is made in the US, and how the US political system works. It also gave our fellows the chance to re-frame their own research to appeal directly to US national interests, and to pitch any recommendations in a way that would be appropriate to US lawmakers. It gave the APR2P fellows a practical way to apply their research to a very specific and potentially powerful audience.

The senators' staff were able to provide a "book end" perspective to the other views the symposium had presented throughout the week. Other experts invited to the symposium were government bureaucrats, academics, think tank executives or advocates, and so had a very different take on the relevance of gender and security than those in the government. Although all came from a very US-centric perspective, being able to hear from so many voices on security trends and policy enabled the fellows to see their own research from different angles.

Shannon and Luisa now hope to build on the feedback their research has received, and on the new connections and friendships they have made. The Next Generation Symposium participants have been called on to write policy briefs for WIIS, and our APR2P fellows are excited about the opportunity to do so. The University of Queensland and the APR2P Centre is proud to have had two of our PhD candidates represented in such

an exceptional group, and look forward to seeing the results of their collaboration with their new WIIS Next Generation mentors and colleagues.



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