



**LAURA J. SHEPHERD:
RODOVÁ POLITIKA, NÁSILIE A BEZPEČNOSŤ**

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GENDER, VIOLENCE AND SECURITY**

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Laura J. Shepherd, associate professor at the University of New South Wales, opens her publication with a short prologue explaining how she came to study the theories of international relations in the first year of her undergraduate studies. At the same time she is not hiding how she struggled with the vocabulary inherent to the discourse of realism and liberalism in political thought. Despite the fact that she is not giving out details about how she got interested in neo-constructivism, it is apparent that she believes the critical discourse analysis to be crucial to the field of political sciences. *Gender, Violence and Security* is definitely not the first, nor the last time this author opted for deconstructivist methodology in her study. As she states at the end of her prologue, dealing with gender-based violence in international relations will always be a challenge. At the same time, she answers the question of why one should do so by simply saying that it is a matter of life and death.

Publication *Gender, Violence and Security* is, according to author's objective, not a discourse analysis. She denominates the group of her own analytical tools with a uniform notion discourse-theoretical analysis which is applied on a United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. This document issued in 2000 deals with violence against women and children in armed conflicts, as well as invests considerable interest in the participation of these groups in conflict resolution. Accompanying texts to the Resolution are reports issued by the Secretary General in 2002 and 2004. These are

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also the object of Shepherd's analysis, which is not limiting itself to textual description, but is approaching the text as a set of statements of meaning. Shepherd is being quite inventive and prefers approaches such as double reading (content and description), nodal points analysis (repeating denominations and notions) and the so-called subject positioning which is devoted to representation of various subjects in the selected document. All this, of course, is applied through the prism of neo-constructivist theories presented by Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and J.L. Austin.

Laura J. Shepherd sees the discourse of Resolution 1325 as a framework which positions subjects and thus produces and reproduces gender roles. In this exact context, she applies the theories of Judith Butler, who gives the notion of gender a performative sense. Hereby we can see that Shepherd clearly positions herself as a feminist researcher with quite extensive knowledge of gender policy. She beholds the Security Council to be a discursive and normative authority. As such, the Council possesses the symbolic power to urge states into adoption of gender perspective in their public policy. This means that the text is not only prescriptive in its normative manner, but it also imposes an independent discourse of gender. Furthermore, Shepherd argues that this is not the only issue worth studying. She also believes this to be an arena, where the discourse of gender meets up with the discourse of security policy which causes tensions. The author's aim is per se quite ambitious – she endeavours to unveil the limits of this arena and therefore pinpoint how the Resolution itself (re)produces stereotypes and sets its own limits of effective feasibility.

The primary aim of Laura J. Shepherd is to study the way relevant discourses create the constructs of violence and security. Apart from the prologue and a chapter devoted to methodology, the reader can find five other chapters comprising theoretical foundations of international relations, Secretary General's reports, the analysis of Resolution itself and, quite surprisingly, one may also find a brief enquiry into the authorship of this text which happens to be debatable. Nevertheless, the author keeps reminding us that the simple aim of this work is to provide a meta-perspective of the international relations theories and of how the notions such as gender, gender-based violence, security and nation state are all constructed within their discourse. What Shepherd argues in this work is that the debate about security is inherently related to nation states, which seem to be the ultimate authorities and sources of security. The Resolution as a document based on these foundations perpetuates the realist logic of security, which according to the author happens to be dominant in Anglo-American scholarly environment, and which is based on the classical assumption of an ever-present conflict among individuals. This of course affects the way we conceive threats, it influences what we make of them. The readers may be also surprised to find a separate sub-chapter devoted to the perception of gender and violence, which is quite unseen in the field of international relations. She makes ontological differences between the notions of violence against women, gender-based violence and the so-

called violent reproduction of gender, to which she adheres herself throughout her study.

At the end of her analysis, Laura J. Shepherd comes to a number of astonishing conclusions. The discourse of humanitarian policy, as well as the discourse of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, often operate with the notion “women and children“. This automatically associates these two groups together and results in cognitive alienation of women’s abilities and capabilities. This idea of womanhood also happens to reside in concepts of maternity, peacebuilding and tenderness/care, which does not open up the scope for different realities of women’s lives. Women are constructed as the weaker sex, which precludes any potential reader of the Resolution from accepting a situation where women would be the active and involved actors of violence – ergo, they would not fulfil the presented vision of womanhood. Furthermore, this concept also ostracises men from the in-need-of-help group. Men who are victims of sexualised and gender violence are implicitly excluded. Shepherd, as much as other authors devoted to the issue of violence, challenges the “concept of consent”, which is ever so vague in legal terminology and imposes a rigorously normative look upon the security of individuals. Laura J. Shepherd, however, goes even further. Author also turns our attention to those assumptions of the Resolution that victimize women and continually speak of their vulnerability. Yet Shepherd does not fail to remind us of the statistical fact that the principal target group of each armed conflict is the civilian male population. Further attention in *Gender, Violence and Security* is given to the tools Resolution 1325 reserves for states to put gendered peace into practice. Shepherd herself claims not to believe in the revolutionary image of gender mainstreaming. Despite these claims, we shall not say that she refuses gender mainstreaming as a method. Shepherd is simply sceptical towards its application based on stereotypical assumptions and biased concepts, as she believes this is the case of the Resolution. These results of Shepherd’s analysis put her into opposition to the statements of the Secretary General who credits the failure of the Resolution application to the lack of political will, accountability and ability of the actors to get involved. It is quite the contrary; the aim of Shepherd’s discourse-theoretical analysis is to suggest the vague and ambivalent character of the Resolution which destines its own application to be limited. This is partially the reason why Shepherd proposes in her first chapter the criticism of ideological foundations of the Resolution. She beholds it as an ambivalent conjunction of two approaches. The liberal one which proclaims the dominance of international and non-governmental organisations; and the realist one which attributes the security policy in anarchic environment to the states.

It is quite apparent that Shepherd refuses the functionalist approach to violence in international relations. She believes violence to be the organising principle that also constitutes social relations and forms subjects themselves. However, she often emphasizes that she does not aspire to hold the ultimate truth about the effective or non-effective functioning of the international security. By contrast, she calls for further

discussion. As she writes herself, each discourse-related work aims to present an alternative (in her case also a feminist) interpretation of a text. In this case, Shepherd succeeded to point out the elusiveness of some concepts retained by the Resolution and the UN policy. Despite this fact, it needs to be noted that those readers who lack the knowledge of feminist theories about gender and essentialism (which for example, is not fully explained) might feel a bit lost at times. The asset of *Gender, Violence and Security* to the academic field of international relations is undoubtable as the primary aim of this publication is to deconstruct the existing concepts and call for new ones, alternative and more effective.