

IRS JOURNAL



NOV 25 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



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EDITOR'S NOTE

On November 25, Mirabal Sisters, Patria, Minerve and Marie Theresa, who were the lead actors in organizing an underground movement to challenge the regime and were arrested multiple times, were killed by the dictator General Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic. The state ruled by dictatorship assassinated three women activists aged 36, 34, and 25 which caused a huge outrage in public that would eventually lead to the assassination of Trujillo himself six months later.



“If they kill me, I'll reach my arms out from the tomb and I'll be stronger.” - Minerva Mirabal

In 1981, feminists of Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros marked November 25 as a day to combat violence against women. In 2000, the date gained international recognition and official status through a UN Resolution.

This issue is dedicated to show what the international system is doing to prevent the violence against women and whether their efforts are adequate and beneficial or not. We will examine countries' "Feminist Foreign Policy", UN's efforts and how they fail to address the issues and root causes along with harassment cases in Peacekeeping operations that only bring more violence to women, not the promised peace, and new female leaders from Japan and Mexico.

As of November 26, when I'm editing this issue, Anıtsayaç shows that 412 women were killed in Türkiye in 2025. Remember their names. Remember the 412 lives that were stolen because of the lack of capability and effectiveness of protective measures and complete abandonment of law.

We hope this issue is informative of the international politics part of the universal fight against violence against women.

Aslısu Furtana

FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: A REVIEW OF CANADA AND SWEDEN



When Mary Wollstonecraft conveyed in her response to Émile that it was justice, not charity, what the world was in wanting of, modern feminism was sprouting with each of these words that she carved into the paper, which was a righteous uprising against the world's order constructed on discrimination and oppression. A pen had been long seen to be mightier than a sword, yet few would have expected a woman's ink to reshape the political order not only for her fellows but for all, with reason, unification, and words—the essential tool for consensus. From Parks to Yousafzai, many followed these footsteps against inequality, political exclusion, and structural violence; thus evolved and expanded the feminist thought, gradually establishing itself as an inseparable part of contemporary political life.

In the scope of the last few decades, feminist ideology has resonated through various socio-political actions, encompassing a spectrum from activist movements to policy-making areas. Circumposing its arguments around gender equality, peace, inclusive diplomacy, and other notable principles, the international relations theory of feminism is now a significant subject matter in numerous political agendas around the world.

In adopting a philosophy that internalizes recognition, negotiation, and a diplomatic roadmap toward addressing structural inequalities, feminist theory offers practical tools for rethinking how international actors (ought to) operate. Despite the common, and rather persistent, misconception that straightforwardly associates feminism with femininity, and that with peacefulness, merciful, and benign attitude in politics, the feminist theory's logic transpasses the borders of remaining a few soft-headed moral sentiments and adopts a rational problem-solving as its principle, when the world churns with the aggression of self-interests and exclusivity-based politics on a daily basis. In other words, the feminist view of the world can be an ointment to a number of chronic and growingly acute deadlocks in both domestic and international politics. Even though several states have experimented with feminist approaches over the past years, several of them stood out more remarkably.

In the extent of this topic, two of them will be put on the table: Wallström's Sweden and Freeland's Canada, whose foreign policy formulations are arguably the most well-documented and efficacious cases of integrating feminism in political agenda. Whether it was the Canadian government's introduction of a feminist development framework in 2017 to expand the margins of global funding for gender equality or, for instance, Sweden's avant-garde venture to adopt the first official feminist policy in the world, the two countries stand as pioneers in promoting the feminist thought and its rationale in politics.

Sweden: The “Three Rs”

Sweden launched her first feminist foreign-policy in 2014 under Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, the architect of the idea. Aiming to institutionalize and expand the feminist framework to each and every dimension of foreign policy, the Swedish FFP revolved around the principle of the “three Rs,” which were “rights, representation, and resources.” This triad necessitated Sweden's foreign policy initiatives to undergo comprehensive gender analyses, to commit to women's empowerment, and to erect the Swedish international posture anew with a heightened awareness in diplomacy, security, and trade. Remarkably, this striking venture brought about positive and rapid change, as the country exhibited concrete commitments to trace its feminist pathway in international politics: Several others of Sweden's prominent actions can be exemplified as her global leadership on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights at the UN and EU, creating Swedish Women Mediators Network to enhance women's participation in negotiations worldwide and employing women ambassadors to balance gender in the workplace. According to OECD and SIDA reporting, around 87% of Sweden's bilateral development aid in 2017 had gender equality as a principal or significant objective.

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Remarkably, Wallström's government preserved this attitude in conflict zones as well, if not perfectly. In 2015, Sweden called off the "Cooperation Agreement on Military Equipment" in Saudi Arabia, which had allowed Swedish arms exports to the country, military training, and joint development of military systems, upon humanitarian concerns. Despite Saudi Arabia's recourse to retaliation, Minister Wallström stood by her feminist policy package, condemning their interlocutors for running counter to human and women's rights. As another example from the Middle East-region, considerably, Sweden was one of the first EU countries to recognize Palestine in 2014 as well, demonstrating her dedication to international law and fundamental rights.

Nonetheless, there were critical contradictions: Sweden's continued dependence on the arms industry and exports to the Gulf and other non-democratic states, e.g., Pakistan and Thailand, put her at odds with the core of the promising and arguably effective FFP philosophy. Likewise, Sweden began allowing many fewer asylum-seekers to take refuge in the country after 2015. Albeit successful, the feminist framework could still not fully address gender-based violence, employment gaps between native-born and immigrant women, and sexual abuse scandals in the Swedish Armed Forces ("#givaktochbitihop" movement), for instance. Furthermore, as promising as it was, the Swedish FFP framework came to an end and has been discontinued since 2022.

The "95%" Target: An Impression of What Canada Might Aim For

In the past few years, the Canadian government's commitment and media had emphasized a challenging yet courageous "95%" baseline, which aimed that no less than 95% of Canada's bilateral international development assistance initiatives through Global Affairs Canada will target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. While such targets gave the impression of an extensive feminist foreign policy package, Canada's feminist approach has been more development-focused rather than a whole-of-foreign-policy framework when compared to countries like Sweden. The Trudeau government's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), launched in 2017 and championed by Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, was the centerpiece of how Canada endeavored to integrate feminist thought into its foreign policy, whereas its overall extent remained constrained to developmental assistance, rather than a comprehensive action plan covering numerous areas to empower women. In addition to this financial plan, the Canadian government created and invested in the Equality Fund, a CAD 300 million global financing mechanism, to support feminist organizations, women peacebuilders, and gender-rights movements. More financial support has been given to other organizations, such as Funding for Women Human-Rights Defenders (WHRDs), to protect LGBTQ+ rights-defenders and members, feminist activists, journalists, and environmental defenders.

Nevertheless, the objectives of the Canadian government were not limited to the financial sphere, even though not entirely extensive. In accordance with her Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, Canada incorporates gender perspectives while, for example, promoting women's participation in conflict resolution, preventing gender-based violence, by training peacekeepers. Moreover, perhaps being one of the most sensitive points in the North-American history, the Indigenous women's leadership in climate change⁴ (alongside other feminist climate activism); feminist humanitarian assistance applied in responses to Afghanistan, Haiti, Yemen, Ukraine, and the Rohingya crisis; Anti-Human Trafficking⁵ & anti-gender-based violence programmes to ensure legal reform, police training, survivor support, and border-management with a gender lens were all funded by the Canadian Government in the framework of feminist foreign policy.

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In a glimpse, overall, Canada appears to have contributed to shaping global gender-equality efforts through its scale of investment and policy innovation through the feminist approach it employed in foreign policy, even though her framework stands out more with its technocratic and financially driven side, when compared to those similar to Sweden's.

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Derya Güneş

JAPAN'S IRON LADY: SANAE TAKAICHI



In recent days, Japan made history by electing its first female prime minister. This development challenges the country's longstanding patriarchal structure and marks a significant moment in which a woman has risen to prominence within a traditionally male-dominated sphere. She has stated that she aims to become Japan's "Iron Lady," a title famously associated with Margaret Thatcher and one that reflects her commitment to steadfast conservatism. The rightward shift observed in Europe has, in a similar manner, gained momentum in Japan with Takaichi's rise to power.

Before entering politics, Takaichi was engaged in music, sports, and even automobiles; following a career as a news anchor, she embarked on her political journey. Her political awakening emerged from an effort to understand how the United States perceives Japan. She argues that China, Korea, and Japan are often treated as a single undifferentiated bloc and remarks, *"Unless Japan can defend itself, its fate will always be at the mercy of shallow U.S. opinion."* This statement reflects strong stance toward the American-dominated international order.

As a staunch conservative, Takaichi has promoted restrictive policies regarding women and gender, such as opposing legislation that would allow married women to keep their maiden names, arguing it undermines tradition, and opposing same-sex marriage. However, during her campaign, she has softened her tone and expressed support for childcare services and women's career development.

Her stance on foreign relations is only just becoming clear. Recently, when asked in parliament about Taiwan, she said, *"If there are battleships and the use of force, no matter how you think about it, it could constitute a survival-threatening situation,"* showing her support. The tensions with China over Taiwan indicate that Takaichi is likely to pursue a strong and protectionist foreign policy. Overall, Takaichi's rise to power highlights the growing visibility and power of women in politics, showing how women can shape both social policies and national strategy.

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Nurmina Gültekin

THE STREETS: WHERE EVERY WOMAN IS EQUAL IN RISK



The Mexican president Claudia Sheinbaum was groped by a man while she was speaking to public in the Mexico City. That incident sparked and raised significant question about the lack of security in the streets of Mexico and the inadequacy of presidential security.

During a mingle between Sheinbaum and citizens, a man got close to the crowd according to the videos. Then he reached her body and attempted to kiss the president as there were no security guard seen in the video at the time. Security arrived in the aftermath of grope and forced the criminal back. This humiliating and invasive grope outraged women in Mexico where there are 10 femicides happening on average. Sheinbaum pointed out in the daily press conference, the lack of trust that Mexico cannot provide to its women citizens has been a major problem that they as authorities should immediately address. She further pointed out the issue that invisibility of femicides and children violence, lack of charges, and the failure of public awareness in prosecutor employees in the Mexico. Patricia Mercado, congresswoman, emphasized the wide spread of violence against women and told that *"The president lived what thousands of women experience on the street, out in public, at work."*



Sheinbaum underscored that in order to address the providing secure streets for women, new resolutions would be announced as the punishments would become severe. The senator Martha Lucia Micher added that crime should be classified as serious problem where public officials should get heavily trained in reporting them. Besides government also should conduct public awareness campaigns while working with both women and men, she added. However, several feminist activists questioned Sheinbaum's proposals as she focuses heavily on the criminal aspect of the story which fails to address the feasibility of such resolutions since they have been generally ineffective in reducing gender based crimes in Mexico. Since there has been inadequate implementation of policies the activists said, the government should reignite educational campaigns where sexual abuse cannot be accepted as a cultural norm, they should to create the social shift. Activist Orienda Lopez noted that *"What are we doing so that men have a masculinity that isn't toxic, that isn't violent, that isn't invasive – so that they're not abusive?"*

The masculinity that Lopez underlined has significant effect on the culture of Latin America as well and it is called **"machismo"**. It is a culture widely seen in Latin America where men are raised as being superior to women and believed to have power on them. While experts suggest that it is the combination of a machista culture and "institutional weaknesses" that continue to facilitate gender-based violence in the countries of Latin America. The further issue that activists pointed out turns out true that authorities of Mexico had attempted to increase prison sentence yet no direct effect were seen before 5 years ago as well. Caroline Beer emphasized in year 2020 that reducing gender based violence and femicide has almost nothing to with how many months or years that they spend in jail. Because since investigators and prosecutors are untrained and inadequate to take violence cases seriously for years and that means the failure of effective public policy.

THE STREETS: WHERE EVERY WOMAN IS EQUAL IN RISK



Therefore, while increases in prison sentences could be a sign of government interest, impunity rates are slightly high for major crimes since no serious institutions have found for prosecution. As we can see today, even if severe punishments were applied, after five years there has been no visible improvement, and no concrete change can be seen on the streets.

The outrage of women in Mexico has been escalating since November 6 when Sheinbaum was sexually harassed, and Gen Z protests are still ongoing. They march, protest, and resist against their lack of protection and neglect by the police. Especially on the November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, they raised their voices being the voice for all the women who report violence and are not supported. Women marched for every woman's life, from the most vulnerable to those in the highest offices, showing that violence in Mexico now touches even its president.

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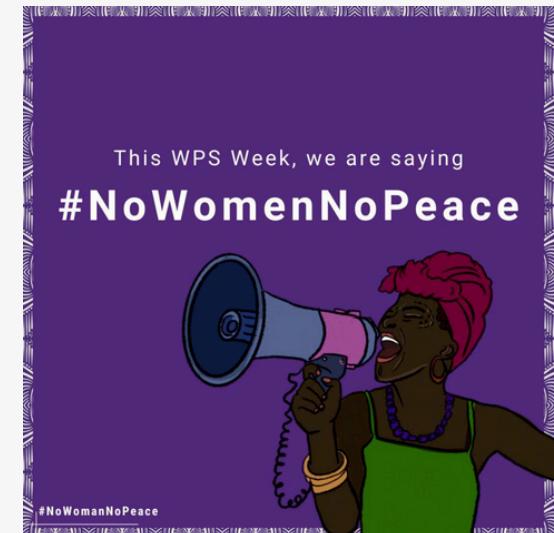
CREDIBILITY OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA



Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda also known as The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) is one of the foundational documents for women's peacebuilding history. It has historical importance because it supposedly challenged the perspectives on women as victims of war, leading to their recognition as essential agents for constructing lasting peace. The agenda is made of four core pillars: **Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery**.

Despite its clear mandate, WPS agenda is criticized by feminist scholars for being only a symbolic act. It acts like a checklist of commitments that fails to change the male-dominant and powerful institutions which are responsible for its implementation. The agenda fails for two main reasons: it includes women only on the surface, and it reinforces narrow gender roles.

Many feminist scholars argue that WPS' implementation favors only the most visible but least transformative action which is increasing the numbers of women who partake in peace negotiations without challenging the structures of war and security.



Moreover, Glenda Sluga, a prominent historian, criticizes this superficiality by calling it the "add women and stir" approach. This focus explains that WPS agenda only symbolically includes women while not trying to change structure. Another scholar, Cynthia Enloe, argues that policymakers, looking for easy wins, simplify WPS to putting more women in uniform. Therefore, this allows those who profit from militarism to reproduce unequal structures while only pretending compliant with gender norm.

Instead of recognizing women as diverse political actors, the WPS agenda often pushes them back into traditional roles. Laura Shepherd argues that agenda's language frame women to absolute roles, "protection (submission)" or as naturally "peacemakers". Dianne Otto notes that this focus on vulnerability allows the UN Security Council to return to its comfortable position as the masculine "protector" especially when resolutions allow protective approaches to dominate the discourse, highlighting women's status as victims.

Another important structural limitation of WPS agenda is its narrow focus on formal armed conflict within liberal peace framework. As a result, it ignores the everyday structural violence that endures during peacetime. Security policy's foundations are built on hypermasculinity that treats military force as real strength and resisting diplomacy, following the belief that based on the logic "The Enemy only understand force." This logic prevents serious dicussion of the politial and economic roots of violence and reinforces the idea that war-making is masculine, peacebuilding is feminine.

continued on the next page

CREDIBILITY OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA



Therefore, the WPS agenda has failed to address the direct link between global stability and widespread state-level misogyny. Since UNSCR 1325 focuses on international peace and armed conflict, it overlooks domestic gender-based violence. By focusing on peacekeeping roles, the agenda overlooks the deeper problem which is the ongoing militarization of security that depends on social inequalities. For women, no accountability from international platform, their core struggle remains existential which is simply trying to stay alive.

In short, even though WPS agenda has increased visibility and provided legal tools and provide a discussion on gendered hierarchies, it has not challenged or change gendered hierarchy of international politics, leaving women's contributions marginalized and the agenda largely rhetorical.

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SUPERMANS OF THE UN: THE REALITY OF THE SAVIOR COMPLEX



What comes to mind when we think about UN Peacekeepers? Brave and selfless people who help ones in need perhaps. White men with bags of humanitarian aid in their hands, running around in poor, colonized countries helping starving children of color and saving women from their local abusers. The so-called “Superman” with a UN cape around his neck and a bright smile. However, the truth of these Supermans are far from this white savior fantasy painted by the colonizers. In fact these superman peacekeepers are one of the biggest threats to the local women and children.

One of the first official reports of an abuse by a peacekeeper was back in 2014. Allegations about peacekeepers in Central African Republic raping and abusing children were brought to the attention of global community. After the allegations, a human rights officer with OHCHR and a UNICEF member interviewed an 11 year old boy who gave a detailed description of a French soldier who promised him food in exchange for oral sex. The boy was raped after the soldier negotiated with the peacekeeper. The officers who conducted the interview informed Renner Onana, Chief of Human Rights and Justice for MINUSCA. There were no records of Onana taking any action. Our so-called “Superman”s abused a child and let a child get abused. Peacekeepers were not only the abusers but also the ones promoting and allowing abuse. And the UN kept quiet, protecting their abusers.

Another case was reported by Skye Wheeler, senior researcher in the Women's Right Division of Human Rights Watch. She interviewed a Haitian woman who opened up about her experience. She was raped by a uniformed UN peacekeeper who offered her a lift in his UN marked vehicle. These peacekeepers were not only abusing these women and children but also exploiting and taking advantage of their conditions. Wheeler also mentions the Haitian woman's daughter conceived from the rape. Her skin and hair paler, making her an even bigger target of bullying and abuse she writes. The peacekeeper who raped the Haitian woman and left her with a daughter is no where to be found. That woman and her daughter have to live their lives with the consequences of the peacekeeper's monstrosity.

The UN has historically been controversial about their peacekeepers actions and the stance they had about these actions. As mentioned earlier, one of the first reported instances was undermined. Ander Kompass and a group of officers tried to pass the report of children getting raped and abused by French soldiers and this being allowed by the peacekeepers to the French authorities. However, this was not approved by the UN and Kompass was accused of leaking sensitive information.

Kompass was later investigated and forced to resign and only after The Guardian shed light on the situation, he was not the main focus of the investigation. Up until then, the UN was more concerned about the story going public than the actual abuse and horrible treatment they were advocating for. And of course, the UN did not take the actions that made the matters better.

The new accountability actions included reports and investigations about allegations. Their reports somehow focused on the nationalities of the abusers and somehow majority of the abusers recorded were local men. The white savior fantasy was kept alive this way. This shifts the focus of the agenda from being about women and children to being about men and nationality.

Despite the UN's records mostly having men of color as the abusers there are hundreds of cases both reported and not reported where the so-called “Superman” is the abuser. And these men cannot even be identified most of the time. Or are they protected by the UN and their governments?

SUPERMANS OF THE UN: THE REALITY OF THE SAVIOR COMPLEX



According to UN's official reports, the cases of UN peacekeeper abuses in conflict areas have decreased. And the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is so sensitive about this issue. Well, as sensitive as the internalized misogyny and colonizer mindset allows him to be. The decrease in numbers is promoted as a prideful thing by him and his office but isn't it weird to applaud a "decrease" in an action pattern when this should not have been an agenda item in the first place? Or is it a pride for the UN that the abusers are mostly people of color and their white savior complex is secured?

Guterres surely expects a standing ovation for a statistical achievement or his European peacekeepers being "less abusive" than local men. But is it what he should be doing? Or is it what we should be grateful for? No. Neither the abuse nor the normalization are things we should settle for. The UN should eliminate the factors around the world which objectify women and children. The UN should fight against misogyny both in countries with higher welfare and in countries with conflict. But perhaps they should first fight against the mindset within the organisation which settles for lowering the numbers or further marginalizing groups.

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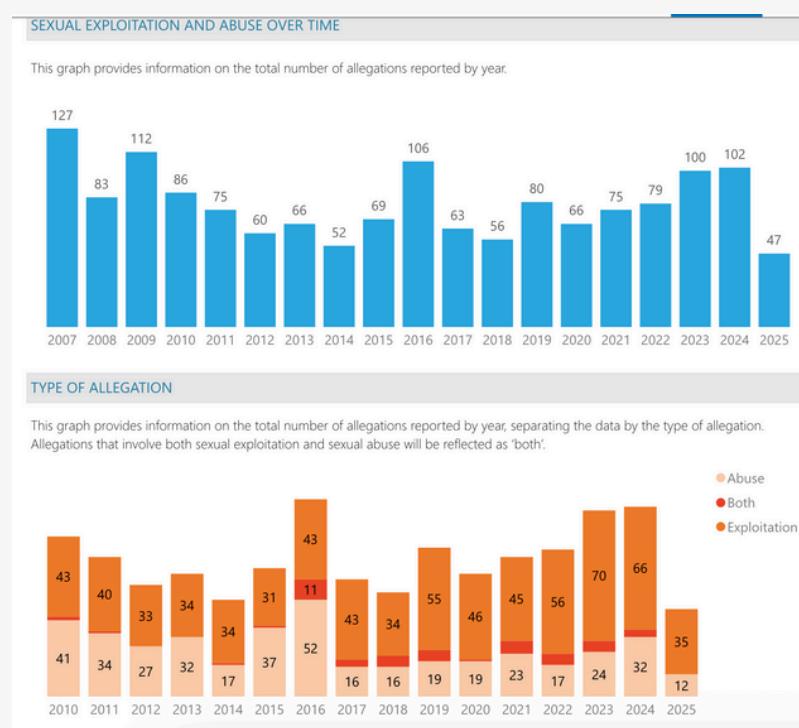
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CREDITS

Writers

Aybuke Yilmaz
Çağan Irmak Acar
Derya Güneş
Nadide Hayat Öztürk
Nurmina Gültekin

Editor / Designer

Aslısu Furtana



Contributors

Aral Çağan Yurtseven
Ata Tanrıverdi
Eda Naz Gezer
Ege Orhun Yağcı
Göktürk Önal
Metehan Alpay
İbrahim Polat Topcu

UPCOMING IRS EVENTS



KKTC Seçimleri ve Adanın Geleceği

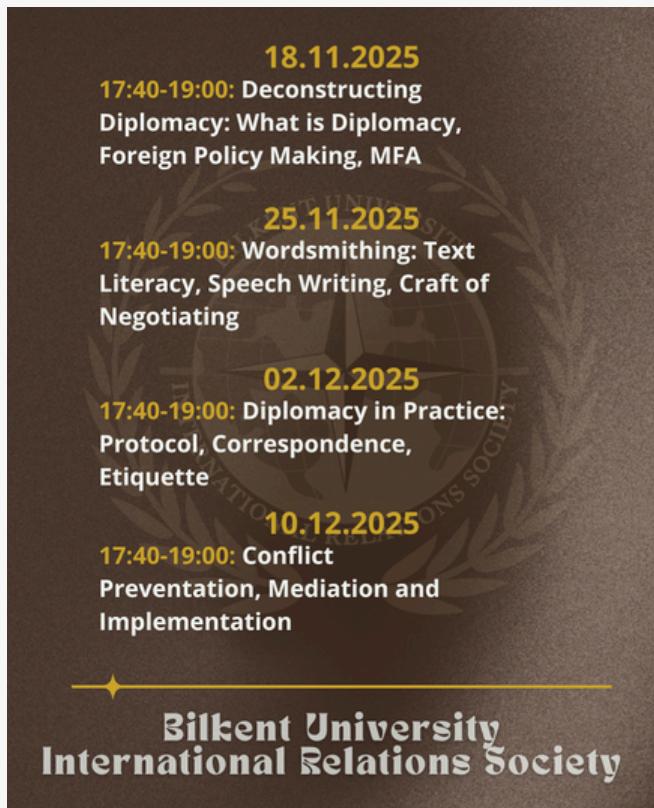
Konuk: Dr. İpek BORMAN

• The Event will be held on Zoom
• Etkinliğimiz Türkçedir

3 ARALIK 2025

17:40-18:40

A circular portrait of Dr. İpek Borman, a woman with blonde hair, wearing a yellow blazer.



18.11.2025
17:40-19:00: Deconstructing Diplomacy: What is Diplomacy, Foreign Policy Making, MFA

25.11.2025
17:40-19:00: Wordsmithing: Text Literacy, Speech Writing, Craft of Negotiating

02.12.2025
17:40-19:00: Diplomacy in Practice: Protocol, Correspondence, Etiquette

10.12.2025
17:40-19:00: Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Implementation

Bilkent University International Relations Society

