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## **THE FEMINIST CULTURE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND COMMUNICATION: A DIALECTIC APPROACH**

Public diplomacy and communication are integral to the policies by which we realize the country's economic, cultural, and development path. Regarding feminism in this area of social action, in today's modern, legally egalitarian 21st century, women, that is, the concept of women in politics, are still not fully accepted as an opportunity to run a diplomatic program or institution. Resistance to established norms and principles of equality raises many questions about why legal equality has not been achieved. Therefore, this study aims to show the causes and consequences of gender imbalance in general and from the perspective of the Balkan countries, for which the recognition of women's work and achievements is often unconsciously unacceptable. With a dialectical approach to the existing diplomatic arrangement and social action of women, we highlight the need for further research, especially in the Balkan region, which still reflects the political immaturity of gender equality, deeply rooted in anachronistic approaches to all aspects of social life.

*Keywords: public diplomacy, communication, feminist culture, women's leadership, policy of (in)equality, dialectical approach*

## Introduction

Throughout human history, as humanity moved from general survival to intellectual development in all walks of life, women have been a secondary and less important potential for development. It was always intended to generate certain thoughts specific to that time or place. Traditionally, the leading majority opinions have emphasized the boundaries and frameworks within which the female gender resides, and these boundaries need not be abandoned. In the Balkans, with its turbulent past, deep traditions, and specific way of thinking, a woman had the title of "mother and housewife" and only had to provide for the home and family, while education or taking on a new role in society was unacceptable. Thus, a woman was first the property form of the father (pater) and then by the marriage of the man (manus). Over time, women's awareness, perception, and personal understanding of their abilities is growing, and as early as the second half of the 19th century, Europe was undergoing socioeconomic changes as a result of bourgeois revolutions. Further development in this area changes the way of life, and then the modernization and emancipation of various areas, including feminism. This is how women move with the times, receive education and take on new roles in the struggle for freedom from the patriarchal constraints of time and history. They hold positions in education, science, art, and politics. Although much time has passed since these revolutions, the lack of women in politics, public diplomacy, and communication is still evident today, despite females' proven qualities and achievements. This opens the field of reexamination of common understandings and gender equality in both diplomacy and other leadership roles of world systems. Although women in the Balkans have had the right to vote for decades, there is still a minority on the political stage because old habits do not disappear so easily.

Diplomacy, like many other forms of activity that arise within the framework of human intellectuality and the quest for a simpler life, has its origins in humankind's long history and evolution. The word itself comes from Greek and in its original meaning refers to a folded sheet of paper, representing proof of a completed education. Over time, the term has been accepted to designate official documents. The word itself is therefore only a designation for human action, which goes back to the beginnings of human civilization. Humans are designed by nature to live and work in a community rather than as individuals. Therefore, from the beginning, there was a need to regulate relationships, negotiations, agreements, and other forms of cooperation in communities. This economic determinant formally received its name only in the 18th century and to this day carries the importance and burden of leadership and the building of relations between states.

According to Svjetlan Berković (2006), every scientist, based on his foundations in international relations, "presents diplomacy as the formulation and implementation of foreign policy." (Berković, 2006) Accordingly, diplomacy is a specific means by which foreign policy is established in interaction with foreign countries to achieve interests, be it economic, political, commercial, or social. Every activity of diplomatic actors is aimed at achieving the set goals. Many government agencies tasked with creating the political philosophy and atmosphere for positive implementation often take the form of a country's State Department. In addition to this political body, the head of state, the government, and the prime minister also appear. Any governmental body, individual, governmental assembly, or other form must have the ability to implement the established policy and formulate it in a form acceptable to foreign states. At this point, it is not just about high-quality training for the actors, which is of course self-evident, but direct value is placed on communication skills, knowledge of foreign languages and foreign cultures, sovereignty, and argumentation skills, which allows the speaker to convince the other side of the correctness of the type of politics presented. According to Katulić (2009), the life of a diplomat includes "constant practices of transnational travel of people and material objects." (Katulić, 2009) Thus, the key is mutual knowledge, information from all parts of the world, and an adaptable and lenient policy about one's interests versus those of others, and of course the possibility of realizing interests that are defined as realistic and static. As described by the author of *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger, in every era in which humanity has progressed, one state power has changed the laws and imposed policies on everyone else. The author presented our system of political advancement on the public stage through stages. In the 17th century, under the leadership of Cardinal Richelieu, France formulated and implemented a national interest-oriented approach to international relations. "In the 19th century, Austria re-established the so-called European Concert as a meeting point for European diplomacy. The 20th century was defined by the United States of America." (Kissinger, 1999) It effectively and shamelessly entered the public arena, manifesting the individualism and sovereignty of each country and the attitude that no one should interfere in its interior and its order, saying that its values are universal and everyone should appropriate them. But the present is even more complex than the impact of different policies in previous years and centuries. Events came from many parts of the world, many state entities and many diplomatic missions were established. At the same time, multilateral diplomacy developed with international contacts and strengthened the diplomatic service. The philosophy of one political party can no longer be imposed, but they combine and derive the results of majority interests from it. In such

constellations, human progress has led to gender equality in all sectors of the economy. However, the question arises as to how much gender equality is present in public diplomacy and communication, which is the central topic of this research.

This research is based on understanding theory and practice, law and politics, individual and social attitudes, and their dialectical relationship. Our vision of feminist culture in public diplomacy and communication starts from the rational nature of consciousness and the point of view that theory and practice must be understood as an interconnected dynamic interaction that should produce results. The goal, of course, is to contribute to the analysis and better understanding of the persistence of gender inequality in all areas of contemporary social activity. The specific goal is to raise awareness of the importance of gender balance, starting from an individual to a general and social problem. Finally, with this study, we try to encourage a dialectical approach in the further analysis of public diplomacy and communication as a context for effective interdisciplinary research in different environments, especially in the Balkans.

### **Feminist Culture of Public Diplomacy and Communication**

Like any other topic related to human existence, its tendencies and goals of action, the feminist topic in public diplomacy and communication is a subject of great interest to theorists, researchers, and writers, whose works provided assumptions and data about the action and place and role of women in this area. This led to the understanding of many theories and emphasis on women's desirability in diplomacy, their rights, leadership qualities, and many other sub-topics hidden under the line of gender theories.

The revolution at the end of the 18th century, despite the restriction of women in political action, required new theories and principles, so many works are based on this topic and were covered by Tickner (1992; 2001) and many others, who with their creations formed statements about women's rights, about the expansion of women's aspects and their participation in business processes, such as politics. Although women's power in the public sphere has increased in the form of movements and reforms for women's rights to vote, work, equal rights, opportunities, and perspectives, diplomacy is still a form of activity reserved primarily for men. The power of women comes from feminism and the acceptance of feminist theories, so the continuation of the work will refer to the analysis of the work of Tickner (2001), who interprets feminist theories as segments of multidisciplinary sciences, both social sciences and natural sciences, humanities, and philosophy. Using an epistemological approach, it was established that women are present in all fields of science,

business, and activity and that their influence is increasing over time and space. Also, women are at a different level in each segment and it is possible to categorize for each segment separately whether a woman has the same rights as a man. Feminism requires understanding and accepting the concept and principle that a woman is capable for as long as she wants and has human dignity and freedom to exist. According to Tickner (2001), feminist theories are "defined and described as liberal, socialist, psychoanalytic, postmodern, and the like, each theory having its foundations and principles." (Tickner, 2001)

With liberalism, women distance themselves from established state principles and frameworks that define them as a limited group, resorting to forming their private groups in which they continue to fight and express their beliefs and interests. On the other hand, through socialism, feminist theory inherits beliefs about the intellectual progress of the population and society's general view of women as a form of government. Thus, through psychoanalysis, we arrive at beliefs about individual cognition and thinking, as well as mental structures and their commitment to feminism or resistance to women's success.

The twentieth century marks the beginning of postmodernism, an era of progress and movement towards a better and broader aspect of culture, science, and technology, as well as values that open the way to prosperity for women. Women's struggle for the right to vote began at the beginning of the French Revolution. According to Iva Bilopavlović's master's thesis (2021), "the struggle continues in 1848 in the USA, where a meeting on women's rights was established and the Declaration of Rights and Emotions was adopted, which gives them the right to vote and, among other things, the right to property, custody of children in case of divorce, higher education and employment opportunities." (Bilopavlović, 2021) European women followed this progress and continued on their way in the 1860s when English suffragettes gained the right to vote in the churches. However, the First World War changed people's lives in a completely different direction. There will come a difficult time, a time of struggle, when the importance of women will be recognized, especially when, after the Second World War, they begin to gradually approach diplomacy and party politics. Thus, already in the second half of the 20th century, the beginning of their strong activity in leading positions up to the heads of state is visible, not only in the political direction but also in the economy and the media as central segments of the representation of the state.

## **Women's leadership and political participation**

Women make up half of all humanity, and even 60% of the educated part of world society are women. This is approximately half of the total intellectual potential of the world's population. When it comes to politics, according to UN research (United Nations, n.d.), women bring a great advantage in diplomacy. Their approach to communication and solving problems in a softer, more pleasant way than men certainly puts them in a high place in political processes.

A United Nations study also found that women in government and parliament make laws that are always in the interest of the common people and society as a whole. For example, the crucial importance of the presence of women in politics is highlighted in contrast to entrenched discrimination: out of 193 member states of the United Nations, only 34 women are elected heads of state or government. Although progress has been made in many countries, the global share of women in other political positions in the world still needs to be overcome: 21% of world ministers, 26% of national parliamentarians, and 34% of elected positions in local authorities. When we talk about the world level according to the research of UN Women (2021) globally there are only 25% of women in parliament based on the overall structure, with 44.5% of women being in the Nordic countries, America this percentage is slightly lower at 32.2%, Europe has 29.1% of women in politics, Asia 20.8%, Africa 19.3%, while the situation in the Pacific is lowest with 18% of women. (UN Women, 2021)

## **Women in the Economy**

Economic prospects in cohesion with political conditions determine the position of the country at a given moment. The economy is shaped by political philosophy, and political philosophy is based on economic aggregates that exist together and work for the population's welfare and the country's sovereignty. Women are again discriminated against in this business activity so that men dominate their decisions in such an important economic branch for life and general existence. This is exactly why there is such a high level of poverty in the world. By nature, a man does not have the compassion and dose of love that a woman has, and he uses this in every job he does, including in the economy. With the empathy she radiates and her intellectuality, a woman can see and change the world for the better. This section will provide a significant overview of a woman named Esther Duflo, a Nobel Prize winner in economics. Her work, which she wrote with her husband, placed her in the position of the second female economist in the world:

Think again: Every year, nine million children die before their fifth birthday. There are at least 25 countries in Africa where the average person does not live longer than 50-55 years. More than fifty million school-going children in India cannot read simple text. This passage would make the reader close the book and turn a blind eye to the world's problems. (Banerjee & Duflo, 2012)

In the quoted passage, Duflo explains why a woman can make a big difference in the world of economics. In her empathy and compassion, the woman approaches the world and society from the most critical and vulnerable side when explaining the global economy. The problems of hunger and underdevelopment are precisely the problems through which we can reach an ideal economy in the world, and only when we satisfy the basic principles of life, such as good living conditions, education, the rationality of countries, the equality of people, can we move towards further prosperity. Today's society is defined by different starting points of certain interests and this is what is pulling the world back and only a small percentage is progressing. However, it should be kept in mind that the level of income mainly increases with education, while the birth rate and infant mortality decrease. Although these causal links are difficult to discern, women's economic well-being and status are simultaneously improving.

The economic future should solve many problems in our world. Therefore, we should better understand the position of women in the economy and why it is important to promote it.

### **Women in Public Relations**

That a woman is capable and can and has the will to lead and run businesses outside the home threshold has been shown by many years of struggle, education, will, and effort that has been repeatedly rejected or labeled as lower values. However, women persisted in this, and today they are in high positions, not in the number that would be equal to the number of men in diplomacy, but we can still say that the shift is visible.

Courage is more exciting than fear and is easier in the long run. We don't have to become heroes overnight. Just step by step, getting to know new things that appear, realizing that nothing is as terrible as it seems, and discovering that we have the strength to overcome everything. (Roosevelt, 1983)

Eleanor was a political figure, diplomat, activist, and first lady of the United States of America. Her works and words in books encouraged many women to overcome the fear of non-acceptance and unknown phenomena. Through her works, women got a new concept and form in the modern world as we see it today.

According to the latest United Nations (UN, etc.) study from 2021, the situation is clear when we talk about the Balkans, the region where we live, and better understand its characteristics, traditions, and behind-the-scenes opinions.

Of the ministerial posts in Albania, 56% are held by women, in Montenegro 30.8%, Serbia 43.5%, Bulgaria 38.9%, Bosnia and Herzegovina 18.8%, Croatia 23.5%, Slovenia 18.8%, Greece 10.5% and Kosovo 14.9%. Of course, the inequality is greater in the Balkans than anywhere else precisely because of the dominant emphasis on men as leaders and bearers of key decisions. (United Nations, n.d.)

Countries with women at the head of the state are Bangladesh, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, New Zealand, Singapore, Serbia, Norway, and Peru. Inequalities exist, and we must continue to fight against them with public activism, professional texts and books, and by encouraging women to study and improve. In other words, the results of ongoing scientific research in this area must always be presented to the public as new modern theories.

Grunig (2000) thinks that women in the practice of public relations have characteristics and values that are (in practice) ideal. However, the problem arises when this concept is positioned in reality and in the very way society functions in general. There is evident modeling of society in which women have a secondary role, that is, they are not in decision-making positions, although Grunig (2000) thinks that the change would greatly contribute to the development of society in general.

These values should lead women to practices and models of relations with the public, which are characterized by two-way communication and equal care for all stakeholders of the organizational public. If supported, this hypothesis should lead to the conclusion that people with strong feminist values may be the most socially responsible practitioners. If so, it would increase the professionalism and effectiveness of public relations. (Grunig, 2000)

For Tomić (2016), the study of management processes in women is a very interesting research field. Tomić notes that certain authors state that women have an interactive approach to their role (...) using a "transformational leadership that is capable of changing the situation, not just adapting to the

situation) and interactive style of management, adjusting their style and the language they use by the situation they are in and trying to inspire and motivate their colleagues through cooperation and consultation." (Tomić, 2016). The role of gender is perceived as a key component in public relations for several reasons. For Broom (1982), these reasons are a large number of women "who work in the field as well as the different definition and perception of professional roles between men and women (e.g. men are more connected to management - they are doctors, experts, but women are more connected to 'communication technician' as their dominant role)." (Broom, 1982)

Problematizing the difficulties they face in the business and diplomatic world, and the position of women in public relations, Planinić and Ljubičić (2020) introduce the term agreed withdrawal, "which describes how female practitioners accept the existence of discrimination in the workplace." (Planinić & Ljubičić, 2020) In this sense, during selection, Planinić & Ljubičić (2020) think that the selection process or the selection itself favors men because they are given priority, which introduces or increases imbalance and discrimination in the respective decision-making positions and introduces inequality in power relations. However, men continue to dominate the field, and the reason for this is the greater representation of men in management positions, i.e., those associated with responsibility. Responsibility entails power and reputation. These positions are traditionally associated with reputation. According to Planinić & Ljubičić (2020), the fact is that "more women than men acquire formal education in public relations, but this does not mean that women are equally represented in high management positions." (Planinić & Ljubičić, 2020) At the same time, Tomić (2016) believes that researchers with this imbalance threaten organizations that do not understand processes, trends or are discriminatory. "They believe that organizations that block the advancement of women may lose their potential for excellence in public relations." (Tomic, 2016)

Problematizing the position of women in public relations and in general the position of women in socio-political and economic life, Planinić & Ljubičić (2020) introduce the phrase *glass ceiling* with which they try to explain the situations women face in the workplace. For Nedović, Ivanković & Miščević (2015), "the glass ceiling is a term used when talking about preventing women from advancing to higher hierarchical levels in the workplace. The development of society also changes the position of women in society, who are becoming more and more educated and who want to participate in management jobs. Better-paid management positions are in most cases assigned to male colleagues, although educated women very openly express their ambition and knowledge." (Nedović, Ivanković & Miščević, 2015)

Planinić & Ljubičić (2020) note that the term glass ceiling is used when discussing obstacles to women's advancement in the workplace.

Both words have their contexts. A ceiling means an obstacle or a certain level that is difficult or impossible for women to cross. The glass puck illustrates the fact that these obstacles are invisible. It is important to emphasize that progress is prevented regardless of these women's qualifications. Women have a problem breaking through the glass ceiling and fail to advance to the top of the business hierarchy. At the same time, their double role is not recognized in addition to the main stereotype that the most important task of every woman is taking care of family and home. Such thoughts are the main problem when it comes to appointing women to leadership positions. There is a certain amount of fear among employers that a woman will be less productive in performing business tasks if she has to choose between private and business life. The most interesting thing is to observe how men never question this problem. (Planinić & Ljubičić, 2020)

Adamović (2011) states that numerous obstacles prevent women from being in management positions. These are internal and external, and according to Adamović (2011), one of the most significant and at the same time the most pronounced obstacles is the "glass ceiling effect that is created based on the stereotypical assessment of women's abilities, which then has the effect of the impossibility of vertical mobility. The second internal obstacle starts from the assumption of women's lack of entrepreneurship, which stems from insecurity and lack of self-confidence." (Adamović, 2011)

Due to gender stereotypes and predefined gender roles that tradition and society impose on women, there is a lack of self-confidence. This deficit, as stated by Adamović (2011), can result in reduced ambition and, most often, giving up. The third obstacle, which Adamović states is external, is organizational mistrust towards women. This primarily relies on innate stereotypical discrimination that attempts to discriminate against women in a management context. Namely, the female management style is not by society's defined forms and pressures.

One of the reasons for this social phenomenon is that management positions are still dominated by men who conscript similar people for management positions. At the same time, an authoritarian male-dominated culture with its harmful gender stereotypes and attitudes further hinders women's progress in all areas of social life. In general, leadership roles in public diplomacy, business, legal affairs, and the media are still dominated by men, but it is also noteworthy that gender diversity in decision-making has still been very little researched.

### **Concluding considerations**

Women were not at a desirable level in diplomatic and public communication for long. Still, over time their activity and influence in politics left a mark through reforms, movements, and rhetorical struggles against all forms of discrimination related to them and their business life.

Breaking down the traditional barriers of patriarchal structures and stereotypes of society, bringing a unique perspective to international relations, women entered the world of public diplomacy and communication with their leadership skills, creativity, and empathetic worldview, applying their knowledge and creativity in public life. Their names in history indicate their role and importance in all aspects of society, visible in all positions, the ability to control and lead the country, economy, media, and politics and achieve results in science and art. However, their potential is still not fully exploited, especially in the Balkans, known for its turbulent history and anachronistic traditions.

We consider it particularly useful to emphasize the need for further study of this problem, sculpting the region of Southeast Europe from the rest of Europe.

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## **FEMINISTIČKA KULTURA JAVNE DIPLOMACIJE I KOMUNIKACIJE: DIJALEKTIČKI PRISTUP**

Javna diplomacija i komunikacija sastavni su dio politika kojima ostvarujemo ekonomski, kulturni i razvojni put zemlje. Kada je riječ o feminizmu u ovom području društvenog djelovanja, u današnjem modernom, pravno egalitarnom 21. stoljeću, žene, odnosno koncept žena u politici, još uvijek nisu u potpunosti prihvaćeni kao prilika za vođenje diplomatskog programa ili institucije. Otpor etabliranim normama i načelima ravnopravnosti otvara mnoga pitanja o tome zašto nije postignuta pravna jednakost. Stoga je svrha ove studije prikazati uzroke i posljedice rodne neravnoteže općenito i iz perspektive balkanskih zemalja, za koje je prepoznavanje rada i postignuća žena često nesvesno neprihvatljivo. Dijalektičkim pristupom postojećem diplomatskom uređenju i društvenom djelovanju žena ističemo potrebu za daljim istraživanjem, posebno u balkanskoj regiji, koja još uvijek odražava političku nezrelost rodne jednakosti, duboko ukorijenjenu u anahronim pristupima svim aspektima društvenog života.

*Ključne riječi: javna diplomacija, komunikacija, feministička kultura, vodstvo žena, politika (ne)jednakosti, dijalektički pristup*