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Women, war and austerity: IFIs and the construction of gendered economic insecurities in Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the gendered circuits of violence that create and sustain economic insecurity in Ukraine. Drawing on feminist political economy analysis of the dependence of structural adjustment programmes on women's labor, and feminist security studies critical analysis of the negative effects of militaries on human security, the paper shows how IFI-imposed austerity measures in Ukraine are inextricable from processes of militarization. While the gendered impacts of each of these distinct processes have been explored, this paper empirically demonstrates how IFI loan conditionalities and militarization intensify and reinforce one another precisely through the burdens they place on households and especially on women in the context of conflict.

KEYWORDS

Ukraine; Global Financial Crisis; International Financial Institutions; gender; conflict; security; Russia

Introduction

This paper uses the framework developed by the editors of this special issue to analyse the gendered circuits of violence that create and sustain economic insecurity in contemporary Ukraine, a country that is simultaneously trying to recover from the effects of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) while engaged in a war against Moscow-backed separatists. The article draws on insights from feminist political economy to highlight the ways that policy changes introduced by Ukraine's government in response to IFI conditionalities disproportionately depend on women's labor and therefore damage women's economic security. It draws on feminist security studies to argue that the process of militarization in wartime Ukraine justifies and normalizes placing additional, extraordinary demands on civilian society – and particularly on households and women whose resources are already over-stretched – to support the war effort.

These dynamics work together to create gendered circuits of violence that connect the peace world of IFIs, macroeconomic policy and the politics of austerity with the war zone where soldiers fight in the Donbas. These gendered circuits of violence operate through flows of money and resources to the war zone enabled by

IFI-mandated austerity budgets that permit unimpeded rises in the state's national security spending supplemented by donations of commodities and labor by civilians. The constant movement of bodies to and from the war zone is another mechanism for these gendered circuits of violence. Masculinized bodies travel to participate in combat operations as soldiers. When they return to the peace world to recover from the physical and psychological injuries of war, they are cared for largely by households as a result of cutbacks in the state's provision of health care. Other bodies – civilian, feminized, many of them women – travel to the war zone as visitors, bringing donated provisions that are assembled and transported using unpaid labor, further increasing the strain placed on households already struggling to cope with the demands of rising taxes, reduced wages and declining social provision.

Research by feminist political economists highlights the links between structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed by IFIs and women's labor, both waged and unwaged, in sustaining households. Research by feminist scholars of security focusses our attention on the damage done to the security of individuals and communities by giving the armed forces a central role and a high – indeed, often the highest – priority when it comes to the policies of the state. But while the gendered impacts of each of these separate processes have been explored, one of this article's contributions lies in its demonstration through an empirical case of the ways that the gendered impacts of IFI conditionalities and of militarization reinforce and intensify each other in time of war to increase the burdens on women.

A central contribution that feminist scholars of political economy and security make to the way that we understand the world is the challenge they pose to the idea of universalized, gender-neutral institutions and processes. Feminist political economists expose the myth that neo-liberal macroeconomic policies ostensibly designed to strengthen and stabilize a state's economy will affect all members of that society equally. Instead, by paying attention to the everyday, by looking in detail at the effects of such policies on ordinary people and by taking seriously the lived experiences of those with little power or influence, scholars such as Diane Elson (1989; 1991) expose the gendered biases underpinning the ways that IFIs and states operate. Reducing the role of the state and increasing the role of the market in order to meet the terms of loans from IFIs does not increase prosperity for all but instead increases the burden on women. As Celeste Montoya (2016, p. 158) points out, 'women absorb the costs and cuts in state expenditure' that result from the austerity budgets insisted upon by IFIs.

This article builds on the work of Elson and Montoya and in particular applies the concept of the 'feminization of survival' developed by Saskia Sassen (2000) to identify and analyze the construction and maintenance of gendered forms of economic insecurity in Ukraine since the GFC. Sassen writes about specific forms of cross-border circuits linking women from developing economies who work for low wages, whether in illicit sectors such as prostitution or in highly-regulated sectors such as nursing, with globalizing economic processes and with the receipt of large amounts of revenue for governments as well as private businesses. While the focus of this article is somewhat different, it draws upon Sassen's insight that not only households but whole communities and indeed governments are, as she puts it, 'increasingly dependent on women for their survival' (p. 506). In the case of Ukraine, women sustain households by filling the gaps caused by the reductions in

state-funded social welfare and by taking on additional paid and unpaid labor, including the extra work needed to negotiate everyday life in the midst of a collapsing social welfare system. Ukrainian women sustain their government by disproportionately absorbing the costs of austerity budgets, enabling political leaders to preserve economic privileges for the highly-masculinized elite that comprises their single most significant base of political power while at the same time making enough concessions to IFIs to ensure the disbursements of their loans.

The article argues that the gendered processes of austerity budgets are compounded by the equally gendered process of militarization, which justifies prioritizing the military and the defense sector above social spending, especially during wartime. As a result of militarization, households are persuaded to place the needs of the military and the war ahead of their own and to take actions in the name of national security that contribute to their own economic insecurity. This involves not only accepting the state's prioritization of defense over social spending but also contributing their own labor and other resources to meet the material and emotional needs of soldiers during conflict and of veterans struggling to recover from the injuries of war, even as limited state-funded social supports are cut back further.

This article contributes to feminist political economy theorizing by identifying and highlighting the significance of a 'national security loophole' in IFI conditionalities: the refusal on the part of IFIs to place constraints on state spending for defense budgets and militaries by those governments seeking loans, despite insisting on strict limits on social welfare spending. This practice is the result of an explicit policy choice on the part of IFIs, but, unusually, it is a policy *not* to create constraints or set conditions. While the work of feminist political economists such as Elson, Montoya and Sassen illuminates the gendered consequences of restrictive actions on the part of IFIs, this article applies the feminist research methodology of paying attention to absences and silences (see, for example Ackerly, Stern, & True, 2006; Wibben, 2016; Parpart & Parashar, 2018) to identify gendered consequences of IFI decisions not to act. The national security loophole may have limited impact during peacetime, but the case of contemporary Ukraine reveals its significance and its potential for devastating gendered consequences in times of war.

Following this introduction, the article sets out key IFI conditions placed on Ukraine since the Global Financial Crisis and demonstrates that Kyiv's austerity measures have a profoundly gendered impact, both by placing disproportionately large burdens on women and by protecting Ukraine's masculinized oligarchy from the full extent of anti-corruption measures demanded by IFIs. The article then considers the ways that the demands and dynamics of war reinforce and intensify the gendered impacts of Ukraine's austerity budgets. The exclusion of state spending on defense from IFI requirements on Ukraine and the way that this permits Kyiv to increase the proportion of the state budget on national security is discussed, along with the ways that militarization has operated in Ukraine to create and sustain the sense of necessity for households to make extraordinary efforts to contribute to the war effort. The article considers two of the ways that Ukraine's ability to wage this war depends upon women and increases their economic insecurity: the large-scale involvement of civilian volunteers to donate money, time and labor to supplement state spending on the armed forces; and the reliance upon the families

of soldiers to provide emotional and practical support for veterans who return from the war zone with physical or psychological wounds.

Part one: Ukraine, the global financial crisis and international financial institutions

Since 2008 Ukraine has received several emergency agreements from IFIs intended to help it cope with the Global Financial Crisis, which caused the collapse of international markets for its narrow range of exports and made it impossible for the country to repay its foreign debt, created most notably by its heavy reliance on foreign currency borrowings and its dependence on Russia for crucial energy supplies (Cieslik, Gauger, & Michalek, 2017, p. 9; Mayhew, 2010, pp. 4–6, 9). Ukraine's largest lender among the IFIs is the International Monetary Fund. In November 2008 the IMF approved a Stand-By-Arrangement for Ukraine worth US\$16.4billion (World Bank, 2008). This arrangement was followed by further Stand-By Agreements in 2010 (US\$10billion) and 2014 (US\$10.9billion) and an Extended Fund Facility in 2015 (US\$12.3billion) (Barnes, 2015, p. 6). The conditions attached to these agreements require Ukraine to undertake liberalization (of prices, trade and the exchange rate), stabilization (reducing inflation by tightening fiscal and monetary policy), and structural reforms (especially reducing regulation, improving the oversight of the banking system, restructuring the energy sector and combatting corruption) (World Bank, 2008; Barnes, 2015, p. 2). This means IFIs have pushed Ukraine to restore export price competitiveness by keeping real wages and employment down (World Bank, 2008), to reduce the state budget deficit by increasing taxes and reducing spending, especially on social welfare, to make borrowing more expensive by increasing interest rates, and to cut the state subsidy on energy for domestic users, with the aim of eventually eliminating it entirely.

Although successive governments in Ukraine failed to implement fully the austerity measures demanded by IFIs, Kyiv nevertheless reduced the scale and capacity of the social welfare system, which has a significant impact on households. State fuel subsidies for domestic users of energy have been cut substantially. In August 2010 the government raised domestic natural gas prices by 50% in order to release the first tranche of the 2010 Stand-By Agreement (US\$3.4billion) (Orttung, 2011). The price of household gas rose by a further 54% in 2014 (Aslund, 2014, pp. 71–72). The impact on households can be seen in the 30% decrease in energy consumption between 2011 and 2016, which is the result of reduced usage rather than greater energy efficiency (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2017, p. 4). By January 2018, approximately one-third of the average monthly salary was required to pay the monthly utility bill of a modest-sized apartment in Kyiv (Bayramov & Marusyk, 2019, p. 78).

The acceleration in the pace of government spending cuts to social services during Petro Poroshenko's presidency (2014–2019) reflects the multiple meanings attached to compliance with IFI conditions. In addition to allowing Kyiv to access much-needed funds, fulfilling IFI requirements demonstrates Ukraine's commitment to Western norms and values as well as its credibility as a future partner in Western international institutions such as the European Union and NATO. Poroshenko presented himself as the guardian of the legacy of the pro-European Maidan protests of 2013–14, providing a strong motivation to demonstrate that he

was leading Ukraine towards greater integration with the West, and cooperation with IFIs is an important part of that demonstration. In 2016 Kyiv cut spending on health care by 36.3%, on education by 36.2% and the civil service by 30.6% in comparison to levels of spending in 2013 (Bogdan, Landesmann, Harlik, & Gligorov, 2017, p. 2). Women are disproportionately absorbing the costs of such cuts in a number of ways. Women are far more likely than men to be employed in the public sector, making up more than 75% of the civil service and up to 80% of employees in health, education and other social services (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2017, pp. 6–7). During the period 2013–2016, public sector employees saw their real wages decline significantly; those employed in health care saw their salaries drop to 74% of 2013 levels while those working in education suffered slightly less in comparison, receiving 70.4% of wage levels paid in 2013 (Bogdan et al., 2017, p. 3). The reduction in the number of public sector jobs also puts women at greater risk of losing their employment altogether.

Health care in Ukraine has suffered across the board cuts that have affected hospitals, polyclinics, and ambulance stations. The scale of the cuts can be seen in the decline of the proportion of GDP spent on health, from 4% in 2013 to 3% projected for 2018–2019 (Bogdan et al., 2017, pp. 3–4). The reductions in health care spending are part of a wider reform project intended to increase the quality of care, but so far has only increased the cost to patients. Although by law health care is free to all citizens, the longstanding practice of patients making payments towards the costs of medicines and giving gifts to health care professionals has become both more firmly entrenched and more expensive (Cockerham, Hamby, Hankivsky, Baker, & Rouhani, 2017, p. 55). Men suffer when the provision of social welfare is reduced, but women are disproportionately affected because of their greater responsibility for providing care for their families. This is a pattern that holds true in other parts of the world (Elson, 1991; Burgisser & Nissan, 2016), but there are specific drivers at work in Ukraine.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, women were encouraged to see political change as an opportunity to return to a traditional, more authentic form of Ukrainian womanhood (Zhurzhenko, 2004, p. 25). As part of a wider nationalist revival, folk tales of *Berehynia*, an ancient Slavic goddess of the home, inspired the image of an idealized Ukrainian woman celebrated for her role as caregiver, her ability to hold the family together in hard times, and her willingness to sacrifice her own interests for the benefit of her husband and children (Kis, 2012, pp. 154–158). For women to strive towards this ideal type of maternal behavior is regarded approvingly by many Ukrainian women and men alike (Strelnyk, 2018). During the 1990s and early 2000s Ukraine withdrew from the Soviet-era motherhood contract in which the state provided free childcare places and heavily-subsidized social welfare services that enabled women to work full time outside the home. The gaps left by the withdrawal of this state provision are filled largely by women's unpaid labor, which involves, for example: taking on additional caring roles for children and elderly relatives; engaging in semi-legal forms of small-scale trading; and using barter and bribery to gain access to essential services such as health care (Phillips, 2008).

The IFI-mandated austerity budgets that Ukraine introduced since the GFC therefore represent a new, and even more punishing, phase of an ongoing process. While in the post-Soviet period some Ukrainian women were still able to find or

keep employment in the public sector, it is those jobs that are disproportionately being lost or, at best, providing reduced salaries as a direct result of the conditions placed on Ukraine by IFIs. When households are required to pay significantly higher utility bills as government subsidies are cut and when health care becomes more expensive or simply unavailable at any price, it is women who are expected to somehow find the additional funds or provide care in the home (Zhurzhenko, 2001, pp. 37, 44). Women are also affected more directly by cuts to certain types of social welfare. From 1 July 2014 one of the last remaining social supports for working mothers was removed when the state's financial assistance for childcare for families with children under three years old was abolished in response to IFI requirements to reform social assistance (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2017, pp. 8–9).

While Kyiv is willing to expose women to serious economic insecurity through cuts to social welfare spending, it simultaneously shields the wealthiest and most powerful men in the country by failing to take effective action against large-scale corruption. One of the conditions that IFIs have set for the disbursement of loans to Ukraine is that its government tackle corruption. Ukraine regularly features in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index as among the most corrupt states in the world (Transparency International, 2017). The emphasis in the anti-corruption measures that IFIs require recipient governments to implement are aimed at combatting corruption of the sort that distorts the environment in which businesses operate; in other words, the type of corruption that is dominated by Ukraine's oligarchs.

Oligarchs are extremely wealthy individuals who exert a combination of economic and political power, and the oligarchy in Ukraine is gendered in three distinct ways. First, oligarchs are almost entirely men. Far fewer women than men are to be found at the upper end of the income range; only two women were ranked in *Forbes'* 2016 list of the 100 richest people in Ukraine (Reiting *Forbes*: 100 bogateishikh, 2016). Second, one of the factors that enables the very rich to exert political influence is the fact that their holdings are in masculinized sectors: the most economically and politically important areas and those most closely associated with the interests of the state, such as energy, metallurgy, mining, the chemical industry, heavy industry and the defense industry, and more recently the media (Aslund, 2014, p. 64; Markus & Chavnysh, 2017, p. 1639). With the exception of former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who accumulated her wealth from the energy sector, Ukraine's wealthiest women made their careers and fortunes in feminized areas of the economy whose products are more directly aimed at meeting the needs of households, such as pharmaceuticals and consumer goods (Reiting *Forbes*: 100 bogateishikh, 2016).

The third way in which Ukraine's oligarchy is gendered lies in the close relationship between oligarchs and politics. Rent-seeking politicians and bureaucrats ensure that legislation favours key sectors and oligarchs, while oligarchs fund political parties and concentrate their influence in specific regions of Ukraine to maximize their political power (Puglisi, 2003, pp. 100, 104–105, 112–113; Wilson, 2016, pp. 5–7). Oligarchs are also successful in forging links with members of law enforcement and the security forces, expanding the forms of protection that they enjoy (Savchenko, Subbot, & Demianchuk, 2018). The political leaders in each of Ukraine's post-Soviet governments have been sustained in power by a collection of

oligarchs, many of whom have themselves held high political office, including the presidency. And although the 2019 election of actor and political outsider Volodymyr Zelensky could mark an end to that pattern, the new president has links to media oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskiy. Kolomoyskiy not only owns the television company that made and broadcast the series ‘Servant of the People’ that launched Zelensky’s political career but he also provided extensive support for the new president’s election campaign (Maheshwari, 2019; Miller, 2019).

Kyiv’s anti-corruption efforts are limited at best, and characterized by delays, reversals and a remarkable lack of success in securing arrests, prosecutions and the recovery of misappropriated funds, as can be seen from a few illustrative examples. A package of anti-corruption laws was passed by the Rada (the Ukrainian parliament) in June 2009, including requirements for state officials to declare their assets and a ban on their acceptance of personal gifts while acting in their official capacity, but the implementation was postponed throughout 2009 and 2010, only to be abandoned in January 2011 in favor of less stringent regulations (Sushko, 2011). A National Anti-Corruption Committee was established during Viktor Yanukovich’s presidency, but its operation resulted mainly in the arrests of political opponents of the president (Sushko, 2011).

There was some improvement in Kyiv’s engagement with anti-corruption measures by the Poroshenko administration. In 2017 the World Bank praised the introduction of a new e-declaration system, which makes public the declarations of wealth filed by state officials, pointing out that in the first wave of e-declarations alone, over **100,000** officials declared ownership of approximately \$US1billion worth of cash and bank accounts, which is nearly the equivalent of one IMF tranche to Ukraine (World Bank, 2017). But IFIs are far from satisfied with Ukraine’s anti-corruption efforts. In November 2017, the IMF indicated that it was still not convinced that the government is serious about tackling corruption, citing the lack of tangible results in prosecuting and convicting corruption by high-level officials and recovering the proceeds from corruption (Kozak, 2017). In December 2019 the IMF praised President Zelensky’s commitment to dealing with corruption, and announced an Extended Fund Facility for Ukraine amounting to an additional \$5.5billion over three years. The IMF nevertheless emphasized the need for Kyiv to make further progress in specific areas, such as reducing the role of vested interests in the economy (that is, oligarchs), suggesting that, more optimistic signs notwithstanding, the Zelensky government faces a long, uphill struggle with systemic, large-scale corruption (Statement by the IMF Managing Director on Ukraine, 2019).

The wealth of oligarchs has been somewhat reduced; the wealth of Ukraine’s five most wealthy oligarchs was cut from US\$28billion during Yanukovich’s presidency to US\$15billion in 2014–15 (Wilson, 2016, p. 9). However, this diminution of oligarch fortunes is the consequence of economic recession, cutting off soft loans from banks that oligarchs previously used to expand their holdings, and the reduction in gas imports from Russia (Wilson, 2016, p. 9). Much of the real damage has come from in-fighting, where oligarchs have successfully exploited their own political connections to bring down their competitors (Kononczuk, 2015, p. 3; Markus & Chavnysh, 2017, p. 1636).

The discussion in this first part of the article has demonstrated that both the IFI conditions required of Ukraine and the way that successive governments in Kyiv

have responded to those requirements have gendered impacts on the economic security of Ukrainians. The austerity budgets that IFIs demand of Ukraine target social welfare spending and reduce or withdraw entirely economic safety nets that households rely on, placing a heavier burden of unpaid or poorly paid work on women and undermining their personal economic security. The dependence on women's labor and ingenuity to support households is one form that Sassen's 'feminization of survival' has taken in post-GFC Ukraine. But it is not only households and families that depend on women for their survival. Kyiv's government uses its compliance in driving down state spending on social welfare to placate the IFIs and ensure that Ukraine continues to receive further tranches of loan payments in spite of the failure to take effective action against the corrupt practices of the oligarchy. This means that the economic and political security of a highly masculinized interest group is protected at the expense of households, families and women. This is the feminization of survival on a grand scale: government along with a collection of the country's richest men relying for the survival of their highly profitable and powerful positions on the unpaid labor of women.

The next part of the article explores the operation of gendered circuits of violence in Ukraine: how the gendered economic impacts of IFI conditions are reinforced and intensified by the war in the Donbas. This analysis begins by discussing the exclusion of national security from IFI conditionalities and the gendered economic impact that this position creates. The concept of militarization as articulated and developed by feminist scholars of International Relations and Security Studies is used to reveal the social processes that encourage individuals and groups in society – and particularly women and households – to regard it as their patriotic and personal responsibility not only to accept that increasingly large proportions of the state budget are devoted to defense spending, but also to volunteer their labor to fill the gaps in the state's provision for the war effort. This argument is made by focussing on two areas that demonstrate the movement of resources and bodies between the peace world and the war zone: the crowd funding of civilian support for the military; and the reliance upon civilians, especially the families of soldiers, to provide emotional and practical support for veterans who return from the war with physical or psychological wounds.

Part two: IFIs, defense spending and war in the Donbas

While IFIs require governments to drive down their levels of social welfare spending as a condition of receiving loans, there is one area of state spending that IFIs do not attempt to dictate: spending on the defense. The International Monetary Fund explicitly excludes national security from their requirements, regarding this sector of state spending as 'political' and therefore not an appropriate area for external interference. As Assistant General Counsel to the IMF pointed out in 2002:

Fund policy prohibits the establishment of conditions that would require members to reduce the level of military spending. While the amount which the authorities of a member spend on the military may be very important for the country's macroeconomic position, the Fund has taken the position that the question of military spending is so inherently political in nature that it could not be appropriately made the subject of conditionality. (Leckow, 2002, p. 6)

The World Bank also positions itself as refraining from interfering in ‘political’ affairs and limiting itself to using only economic considerations in its decisions (Boon, 2007, p. 521).

The placement by the IMF and World Bank of national security into the category of political decisions and social welfare into the category of economic (by implication, technical and certainly not political) decisions is itself a profoundly political and gendered act. Moreover, the quarantining of defense from the areas of state spending that are constrained by IFI conditions creates a national security loophole to the downward pressure on state spending. This dynamic operates firstly by implying that IFIs regard national security as an irreducible core of state activity. Such privileged treatment of defense and the military is part of a broader pattern of regarding security as achieved primarily through the threat or use of force, and equating the security of individuals and communities with the security of states. These ways of defining security are the subject of extensive critiques by critical scholars and especially feminist scholars of International Relations and Security Studies (see, for example Cohn, 2011; Hudson, Caprioli, Ballif-Spanvill, McDermott, & Emmett, 2009; Sjoberg, 2009).

Furthermore, IFI requirements on national governments to reduce state budget deficits and set strict limits for social welfare spending mean that any increases in spending on defense will place pressure on the level of deficits overall, further reducing the state’s capacity to provide social welfare for its citizens. This might be a moot point during peacetime, but in wartime or during a heightened state of alert it is a very real consideration. We can see this dynamic in Pakistan, which in May 2019 agreed an Extended Fund Arrangement with the IMF for approximately US\$6 billion. The conditions the IMF set for this loan require Pakistan to reduce its already-low state spending on social welfare but not its defense spending, which accounts for over 20% of the annual state budget. The IMF has come under harsh criticism for imposing conditions that will impact the poorest members of Pakistani society while ignoring the enormous sums that the state spends on the military (EFSAS, 2019).

The World Bank at times takes a tougher line on national governments that increase defense spending while repaying IFI loans. The 1998 documentary *Our Friends at the Bank* shows tense discussions between political leaders in Uganda and representatives of the World Bank when the latter opposed plans by the Ugandan government to increase military spending to deal with an insurgency (Icarus Films, 1998). There is, however, no indication that the World Bank takes this line with Ukraine and, as Andrew Barnes (2015, p. 3) has pointed out, ‘paying for the war directly counters efforts to reduce the budget deficit’, making the overall task placed on Ukraine both more difficult to achieve and more painful for the least prosperous members of society.

The government in Kyiv has increased defense spending very considerably since the start of the war in the Donbas. Ukraine’s armed forces were entirely unprepared when separatists (with substantial support from Russia) seized control of municipal buildings in the eastern Ukrainian towns of Donetsk and Luhansk in the spring of 2014, raising the Russian flag and declaring their intention of secession from Kyiv’s control. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defence has been the site of corruption on a large scale since Ukraine became an independent state at the end of 1991. Suppliers for goods such as fuel for aircraft and vehicles and food for soldiers

would routinely overcharge the state and pocket the profits, often after providing sub-standard goods. Such corrupt practices not only enriched private companies and their owners but also actively damaged military capacity, for example by artificially creating fuel shortages that limited the number of training hours for pilots and, in one infamous example in 2009, by triggering an outbreak of food poisoning involving hundreds of soldiers (Markus, 2016, pp. 94–95).

At the start of the war in the Donbas, the combat capability of the Ukrainian armed forces was described by analysts at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies as 'hollowed out' after years of inadequate resourcing and minimal training (IISS, 2015, p. 200), while Ukrainian academic Volodymyr Dubovyk argued that the poor state of the armed forces meant that Ukraine was 'basically a "disarmed" state' (Dubovyk, 2014, p. 1). Shortages and poor quality of basic items such as food, uniforms and housing for soldiers and officers were endemic. Much-needed reforms to staffing, structure, training and equipment were repeatedly delayed. These shortcomings were reportedly due to lack of funds but political will was undoubtedly a key component, with successive governments tolerating the use of the armed forces as a source of plunder, while the status of the military in society discouraged the 'best and brightest' from joining the ranks (Dubovyk, 2014, p. 1). On the eve of war, Ukraine's military was composed of just under **130,000** active duty troops (of which approximately 65,000 were army or ground forces), largely equipped with ageing Soviet-era weapons and vehicles and funded from a defense budget of US\$2.42bn (IISS, 2014, p. 194), which had recently risen from US\$1.66bn (IISS, 2013, p. 238). Ukraine's military capacity suffered a further setback immediately before the outbreak of the war through the loss (in some cases, temporary) of aircraft, armored vehicles and ships when Russia took control of Crimea (IISS, 2015, p. 170). In its initial operations against the separatists, Ukraine was 'reportedly dependent on a few soldiers and helicopters and a single airborne regiment with inadequate logistics' (IISS, 2015, p. 200).

When the war first began, Ukraine's state budget for 2014 had already been approved but the government moved swiftly to amend it and revise defense spending upwards. In March 2014 approximately US\$3.59bn was allocated to defense and security (an increase of 15.6% compared with 2013) and supplemented by authorizing additional state spending from reserves (a further approximately US\$1bn) (IISS, 2015, p. 173). In 2015 US\$3.91bn was allocated to defense (IISS, 2016, p. 204). The 2017 edition of the IISS publication *The Military Balance* indicates a much lower figure for 2015 defence spending in US dollars (US\$2.29bn) and that the budget for 2016 was lower still at US\$2.17bn (IISS, 2017, p. 227), although it indicates the opposite trend when it gives the figures for defense spending for the period 2015–2017 in Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH50bn in 2015, UAH56.6bn in 2016 and UAH65.4bn in 2017) (IISS, 2017, p. 227), suggesting that changes in the dollar-hryvnia exchange rate are the source of the discrepancy.

Information issued by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense indicate a pattern of continuous growth in defense spending from 2014 onwards. According to a January 2018 report, the defense budget for 2018 was UAH86bn, an increase of 24.3% on the 2017 defence budget of UAH69.2bn (Reform Project Office of the Ministry of Defense, 2018, p. 3). The same report points to impressive achievements in the production, modernization and repair of weapons and equipment for the armed forces, stating that the country's National Procurement Plan for 2018

stands at UAH21.3bn, an increase of 37% over the allocation in 2017 (Reform Project Office of the Ministry of Defense, 2018, p. 3).

The Kyiv government is keenly aware that Ukraine's handling of the war in the Donbas is seen as a litmus test for the country's credibility as a worthy partner for the West in matters of international security. In the short term, the devotion of Ukrainian resources to the war effort supports the government's attempts to persuade Western countries to expand the military support they are willing to provide to Kyiv. But increased spending by Ukraine on defense is not simply an emergency measure for the duration of the war. Kyiv is making decisions about current and future levels of defense spending in the context of a renewed discussion of 'burden sharing' within NATO that has seen intense pressure by the United States on its fellow member states to devote at least 2% of their national GDP to defense. In order to demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to self-defense and its credibility as a future NATO member state, Kyiv needs to display its willingness to meet, if not exceed, these expectations. Making Ukraine's armed forces larger, better-resourced and better-equipped is presented to domestic and international audiences as a necessary component of the wider project of Ukraine joining the West. This connection is made explicit in Ukraine's strategy for sustainable development ('Ukraine 2020'), which aims 'to achieve European standards of life and the decent place in the world for Ukraine' (President approved the Strategy for Sustainable Development 'Ukraine - 2020', 2015). The strategy includes 25 key performance indicators, including increasing GDP per capita, improving Ukraine's performance in the World Bank Group's Ease of Doing Business index, and spending a minimum of 3% of GDP annually on national security and defense ('President approved the Strategy for Sustainable Development "Ukraine - 2020", 2015).

Militarization and the mobilization of women's labor

Kyiv's success both in winning the war and in demonstrating Ukraine's suitability as a future NATO member depends on its ability to persuade Ukrainian society to support the diversion of large quantities of the resources of both the state and households towards the prosecution of the war and to regard such a practice as legitimate, normal and even unquestionable. This is being accomplished through militarization.

Militarization is defined by feminist scholars of International Relations and Security Studies as a process of establishing and then normalizing the notion that the military does and should occupy a critical, central role in the state and society, thereby blurring the distinctions between what is military and what is civilian (see, for example, Åhäll, 2016, p. 162; Eichler, 2012, p. 4; Sjöberg & Via, 2010, p. 7). As Cynthia Enloe argues, individuals or communities have been militarized when they come to accept that they depend on the military to solve the problems of civilian life (Enloe, 2007, pp. 4–5). This gradual acceptance of the need for military solutions is often linked to nationalism and the process of nation-building, especially through the argument that the nation can only be sustained by creating a standing army and placing the needs of the army (e.g. defense spending) above other possible activities of the state.

Feminist scholarship demonstrates that militarization works through social relationships and manipulates ideas about femininity, masculinity and family (Åhäll,

2016, pp. 160, 163), often by promoting gendered notions of patriotism (Eichler, 2012, p. 7), such as the expectation that in wartime devotion to one's country is displayed by men through military service and by women through sending the men of their families to fight on the frontlines and preserving an idealized home for those men to return to when the war is over (Wibben, 2018, p. 144). The household itself can become militarized as a result of the practical and emotional support that a family provides for a household member who enters military service, as well as through the pride that the household takes in its identification, through the soldier, with the armed forces. The military family is conditioned to endure hardships including lengthy separations from their loved one, to be resilient in reabsorbing the soldier - who in some cases returns with lifelong physical or emotional injuries - back into the household and supporting their readjustment to civilian life, while being content to remain in the background apart from the occasional acknowledgement during public ceremonies marking military service (Elias & Chisholm, 2017).

Militarization in Ukraine is sustained by a dominant public narrative that presents the war in the Donbas as a struggle for the existence of the Ukrainian state and nation, with military action as the only legitimate response. This public narrative emphasizes the duplicity of Russia and the separatists, grounded in Russia's use of news media and social media messages that encourage distrust of the post-Maidan governments in Kyiv and the apparent willingness of Donbas residents to believe and act on those messages. Much of the reporting about the war by Ukrainian media outlets is based on government - especially Ministry of Defense - press releases and is strongly partisan. News media coverage of the conflict is supplemented by social media accounts run by soldiers or volunteers supporting the army, which tend to post very emotional and one-sided perspectives (Petik & Herasym, 2016). Skepticism about the prospects for a negotiated settlement to the war is fuelled by the frequency with which ceasefires are violated, and the failure of the two internationally-brokered peace agreements (Minsk I and Minsk II) to be implemented. There is almost uniform public support for Kyiv's war effort among Ukraine's elected officials, who rightly regard it as political suicide to question the need for the use of military force against the separatists.

The public war narrative provides the basis for the mobilization of both state and private resources for the armed forces. The article will now turn to a discussion of two forms that this mobilization takes that rely extensively on women's paid and unpaid labor, and that create and sustain distinctly gendered forms of economic insecurity: the large-scale involvement of civilian volunteers to donate money, time and labor to supplement state spending on the armed forces; and the reliance upon civilians, especially the families of soldiers, to provide emotional and practical support for wounded veterans. In these ways, the gendered impacts of IFI conditionalities - the squeeze on social spending that reduces women's income and job security while increasing the demands on their unpaid labor - are reinforced by the gendered social and economic pressures of militarization.

Crowdfunding the war

In spite of Kyiv's ongoing commitment to high levels of defense spending, the resources of the state are regarded as insufficient to meet the needs of the war

effort. Although the country benefits from access to eight NATO trust funds under NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine as well as other forms of assistance from NATO member states such as training and expert advice (Reform Project Office of the Ministry of Defense, 2018, p. 3), the government has found it necessary also to mobilize substantial resources from civilian society. These resources take the form of donations of money, food and equipment to units and individuals soldiers as well as the labor of volunteers to collect and transport the donated materials to soldiers in or near the combat zone.

During the initial period of the war (2014–2015) the difference between the demands of the war and the ability of the Defense Ministry to meet those demands was particularly large. Households were put under considerable pressure to help fill these gaps, especially where a member of the family was serving as a soldier. Soldiers' families knew that, without their efforts, their loved ones might face the dangers of combat without access to basic pieces of equipment such as helmets or bullet-proof vests. The pressure on households to contribute to meeting the demands of the armed forces also comes in a more general form through calls to contribute to online crowdfunding appeals and to participate in local fundraising efforts. Not long after the war began, the Ministry of Defense itself launched a public appeal to Ukrainians to help fund the armed forces in this emergency, asking private citizens to donate money for medical and logistics support (Saunders, 2017, p. 40).

In addition to the official Ministry of Defense appeal, civilian organizations joined the effort to raise funds and provide the army with equipment and materials. So many organizations were created to support the armed forces that the Euromaidan Press investigated them and endorsed those that it regarded as trustworthy (Verified Ways to Help Ukraine, 2014). The largest volunteer organizations are either formally affiliated with the Ministry of Defense (The People's Project) or are endorsed by the country's National Security and Defense Council (Ukrainian Freedom Fund), and conduct their activities on a truly massive scale. The People's Project alone raised approximately US\$5 million during the first six months of the war, with the average donation just US\$2, indicating the mass nature of donations and suggesting that many of these donations came from those with very little to spare for charitable giving (Stewart, 2015). Donations through this platform fund items ranging from food supplies for soldiers to specialized equipment including an armored transporter, a field hospital and a drone (Hudik & Chovanculiak, 2018, p. 37; Grytsenko & Harding, 2014). The People's Project website also promotes a direct connection between donors and Ukrainian soldiers. The website describes the purpose of each of its fundraising campaigns and explains why the items will make a difference to the war. It also provides regular updates from the front lines that describe how items purchased through its previous fundraising campaigns are making the working lives of soldiers easier. The website reassures donors that their money is reaching its intended recipients by reproducing the documents that the commanders of military units sign to confirm their receipt of the new equipment (Hudik & Chovanculiak, 2018, p. 38).

A close look at the other charities supporting the military that were endorsed by Euromaidan Press reveals that the practices of providing evidence that donations are put to good use and creating the sense of a direct link between donor and recipient are common ones. Links between civilian donors and volunteers and

soldiers are further strengthened by the sponsorship of units by some organizations, and in all cases they are enabled by modern technology, especially social media. All these organizations have a Facebook page with information about the group's organizers, how to make donations and photos showing the donation process from beginning to end: stacks of items donated or purchased with donated funds, civilian vehicles packed with equipment being driven to the combat zone and appreciative soldiers taking delivery of the items, along with photos of signed delivery notes. The use of ways of interacting that are part of everyday modern civilian life - such as donating through crowdfunding, looking at photos on Facebook and liking the pages, transferring money electronically using PayPal - all help to blur the boundaries between civilian and military, thus furthering the process of the militarization of Ukrainian society.

Women play a prominent role in civilian fundraising and support for the Ukrainian armed forces. Iryna Lutsenko, an elected representative in the Ukrainian parliament, made the observation that women are taking the lead in this sort of charity work in 2015 when she spoke to a NATO-supported workshop in Kyiv focussing on women and the war in the Donbas (Fellin, 2015, p. 5). This is in line with broad societal trends in post-Soviet Ukraine; as discussed in the first part of this article, there is a strong social norm that encourages and expects women to take nurturing and caring roles. Although this caring behavior is primarily in support of a woman's immediate and extended family, women are well-represented in Ukraine's emerging voluntary and NGO sectors and tend to be the first to answer the call for action to protect the disadvantaged and vulnerable (Phillips, 2008, pp. 77–78). In wartime this category includes soldiers – the sons and daughters of the nation – who would otherwise go into battle without basic equipment and supplies.

Considering the information available about the charities endorsed by Euromaidan Press, smaller organizations are more likely to be founded and run entirely or mainly by women, such as ATO Sister of Mercy, Joint Army Supply Project and the Diana Makarova Fund. The latter was set up by former journalist Diana Makarova and is comprised of women who originally came together to sew bulletproof vests to protect protesters on the Maidan from being shot by the security services. Now they make or buy equipment needed by soldiers and dispatch it to the fighting zone by the car load (Grytsenko & Harding, 2014). Even in those groups that are clearly led by men, an examination of the photos posted on their Facebook pages reveals that women are very active - and are often the majority of those pictured - when it comes to the practical work of assembling, packing and delivering donated items, including driving heavily-laden vehicles into the conflict regions. Many of the volunteers who engage in this work see it as a seamless extension of their activism during the Maidan protests of 2013–14, especially as it fits so easily into the category of stereotypically feminine nurturing behavior that women were encouraged to exhibit during the protests, when they were directed by male protesters to make their contributions in the kitchens and first aid tents rather than in the forefront of confrontations with the security services (Khromeychuk, 2015).

While the scale of the initiatives taken by civilians to crowdfund the war has been praised as a triumph of civil society, it can also be interpreted as a victory for the Ukrainian government, which has been remarkably successful at persuading households to donate their own scarce money, materials and labor to the armed

forces, even as defense takes an increasing proportion of the state budget. This is another form that Sassen's feminization of survival is taking in Ukraine. Without this additional support from households, including the unpaid labor of many women who collect, pack, and deliver the donated supplies and equipment from the zone of relative peace to the zone of war, Ukraine cannot continue this conflict.

Supporting veterans

The final form that the feminization of survival takes in wartime Ukraine that this article will discuss is in the way that the state relies on households and women to meet the needs of veterans, many of whom require long-term care and support to cope with physical or psychological injuries when they return from the war zone. As of 2018, there were believed to be more than **300,000** veterans of the Donbas war, with many of them reportedly suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and abusing alcohol or drugs (Ponomarenko, 2018). There are parallels here with the circumstances faced by American veterans of the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, thousands of whom returned to the United States with severe, lifelong medical conditions and rely upon their families – most often mothers and wives – to provide full-time care (Enloe, 2010, pp. 192–209).

The Ukrainian state's ability to provide for the needs of its veterans is very limited. While there is an increasing emphasis by the Ministry of Defense on improving the quality of military medical care, much of the attention – and the funding – is directed towards battlefield medicine, to increase the chances that soldiers will survive serious combat injuries (e.g. Reform Project of the Ministry of Defense, 2017, p. 5; Reform Project of the Ministry of Defense, 2016, pp. 9–11). There are now reportedly psychologists in every military hospital in the combat zone, but they are only able to provide diagnoses and short-term treatment (Ponomarenko, 2018). There is a growing recognition by government of the need for greater capacity to meet the demands for longer-term physical rehabilitation, as well as psychological and psychiatric treatment. Despite the creation of a new Ministry of Veterans' Affairs in November 2018, there are so far no indications that it will receive adequate funding to address the needs of Ukraine's veterans (Ponomarenko, 2018, 2019). It is likely that, for some time to come, veterans of the war in the Donbas must find the care and treatment that they can in civilian society.

As discussed in the first part of this article, state-funded health care in Ukraine is under serious pressure as a result of IFI-mandated cutbacks in state spending on social welfare. In addition to the overall shrinkage of facilities and services, support for mental health is under particular pressure; the number of trained social workers, counsellors and psychologists employed by medical facilities was cut by more than 15,000 in an early wave of post-GFC staff reductions (Antonova & Dmytrieva, 2017). Few veterans are offered any psychological support by the state, while those who are report that the availability and quality are inconsistent (Colborne, 2017). Once again, the gaps in the state's ability to provide for the needs of its citizens are being filled by households: directly, where family members have returned from wartime military service, and indirectly, through the work of charities and crowd-funding initiatives aimed at supporting veterans.

Some of the crowdfunding initiatives discussed above extend their remit to include fundraising for the needs of veterans and their families, including one of the larger volunteer organizations: Ukrainian Freedom Fund. The website for Ukrainian Freedom Fund explains why such charities are needed: ‘Because of economic difficulties the government is unable to grant the hospitals with many funds’ and ‘the government does not have sufficient funds to develop a social security program of providing economic relief to the people who have lost close loved ones in the war’. The acceptance in these statements that austerity budgets are inevitable tells us that militarization has done its work. There is no recognition that private efforts on a large scale are the result of political decisions, both by the government in Kyiv and by IFI lenders, to restrict state-funded social welfare programs. On the contrary, the mobilization of civilian society in support of current and former soldiers caused by the war is typically presented as an extremely positive development. In the words of Tanya Bednyak, a small business owner from Kharkiv and a leader of the ‘Help the Army’ charity, ‘War now is like an extremely painful but necessary surgical procedure that in the long run will revitalize the country and its dysfunctional institutions’ (Mironova & Hopkins, 2014). But while institutions and the nation as a whole may benefit in the long term, in the short term at least, it is households and women, already overstretched by IFI-mandated austerity budgets, who pay a disproportionate price for that revitalization.

Conclusions

This article has argued that we are witnessing two distinct processes in Ukraine that interact, reinforcing each other and intensifying the gendered forms of economic inequality that each one, separately, produces: IFI-mandated austerity budgets that target state spending on social welfare; and the dynamics of wartime militarization, which creates and sustains a powerful sense of individual and collective responsibility in civilian society to support the war effort with contributions of money, materials and unpaid labor. Women are disproportionately affected by austerity budgets due to their greater tendency to be employed by the public sector, especially in low-paid, low-skilled jobs that are most vulnerable to cutbacks when budgets are reduced. Women also tend to have a greater responsibility for provisioning and sustaining households globally. In Ukraine this practice is justified with reference to an imagined spiritual link between the national myth of *Berehynia*, an ancient Slavic goddess of the hearth, and modern-day Ukrainian women. This means that the burden of finding creative ways to supplement household income and compensate for the withdrawal of state-provided supports such as domestic fuel subsidies or the provision of health care falls mainly on the shoulders of women. During peacetime this burden is a significant one, but the additional demands of wartime stretch women’s resources, including their time, even further.

In addition to the drain on the public coffers from rising state expenditure on defense, households in Ukraine are expected – and expect of themselves – to make additional, voluntary donations to the war effort. As the close examination of the details of the crowdfunding efforts in this article have demonstrated, women are very heavily involved in these activities, especially in the unpaid labor involved in collecting and transporting materials to the front. Moreover, the capacity of the civilian health care sector has been severely reduced by austerity budgets and is

unable to cope with the demands of soldiers returning from the war with physical or psychological injuries that require long term treatment and care. Once again the household fills the gap by providing the necessary resources, predominantly through the unpaid labor of mothers, wives, sisters and daughters.

The research presented in this article builds on the insights of feminist political economists such as Diane Elson (1989, 1991) who theorize the existence of a gendered bias in the conception and implementation of IFI Structural Adjustment Policies imposed on national governments in the Global South in the name of economic development. The case of Ukraine and the IFI conditionalities required of its national government in order to qualify for loans in the aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis demonstrates the same dynamics of gendered bias identified by Elson. There are some indications that the IMF is aware of gender as an important dimension affecting its operations – for example, since 2015 the IMF has referred in its written guidance to gender as a structural issue that their staff might consider – but so far gender equality has not featured in IMF lending (Bürgisser & Nissan, 2016, p. 6). As True and Hozic (this issue) point out, IFIs pay lip service to gender mainstreaming and to the importance of considering gender in policy decisions, while their actions continue to marginalize considerations of gender, if they are considered at all during the decision-making process. The research presented in this paper suggests that the IMF does not understand that its assumptions about state spending on social welfare as a technical rather than a political matter, and an optional, luxury spend that affects all in society equally, are fundamentally gendered ones with devastating real life impacts on women. The case of Ukraine therefore reveals fundamental continuities of IFI approaches and impacts since the 1980s, albeit in a very different part of the globe and under different circumstances. It is almost as though a generations' worth of feminist theorizing about political economy had never taken place.

This article also applies Sassen's concept of the feminization of survival (2000): the insight that not only households and communities but even governments and states depend upon the actions of women in order to survive. In this context, the case of Ukraine also highlights the gendered impacts of the interactions between IFIs and national governments. For while IFIs set the rules for national governments to follow in order to qualify for loans, national governments are responsible for implementing those rules, giving states the opportunity to interpret not only the rules themselves but also the signals that IFIs send throughout their mutual encounters. We have seen how this works in Ukraine, where the IFIs identified a collection of targets for Kyiv to meet but in evaluating progress towards those targets allowed a faster pace in some areas (austerity budgets) to compensate for a slower pace in others (addressing corruption and particularly the distorting effects of oligarchs' corrupt behavior on the economy). The Ukrainian government has therefore been able to focus the bulk of the impact of IFI conditionalities onto feminized areas of economic activity and keep masculinized areas (such as the oligarchy) relatively protected. This article's exploration of the Ukraine case has also, and importantly, drawn attention to the existence of a national security loophole in IFI conditionalities. The absence of IFI requirements to reduce or limit state spending on defense means that national governments are permitted to protect another masculinized area of economic activity from the impact of austerity budgets. Through the identification and discussion of the national security loophole in IFI

conditionalities, this article not only applies but also contributes to the work of feminist scholars of political economy by highlighting the significance of strategic silences and omissions on the part of IFIs. The loophole for defense spending is perhaps less salient in peacetime, but the experience of Ukraine demonstrates just how important it can become for a state at war.

In considering the combined effects of IFI-required austerity budgets on women in a country at war, it is worth asking how IFIs and national governments might work together differently to pursue the desired macroeconomic changes while mitigating the damaging effects on women. There are several possible ways forward. First, IFIs could close the national security loophole that enables national governments to insulate defense spending from IFI conditions, which in wartime, as we have seen, serves to increase significantly the burdens placed on households and women by austerity budgets. Second, IFIs and national governments together could agree to balance the economic burdens placed upon different segments of society by adjustment programs. In the case of Ukraine, this might involve an easing of the demands for cuts to state expenditure on social welfare while taking a tougher line on the corrupt activities of the oligarchy. Third and most radically, IFIs and national governments could implement the recommendations of Stuckler and Basu (2013), whose research found that stimulus spending rather than austerity budgets actually reduces debt by acting as a catalyst for new economic growth. In other words, the economic security of households and women does not need to be undermined in order to create a stronger national economy.

Finally, this article demonstrates the benefits of analysis using the framework developed by True and Hozic (this issue), which involves combining feminist political economy and feminist security concepts and in so doing highlights the operation of gendered circuits of violence. In this case, the feminist political economy perspective keeps our attention closely focused on the household and on the everyday, material conditions of women when applying a feminist security studies concept like militarization, which has often been used to explore symbolic and discursive aspects of women's security and insecurity. The addition of militarization provides a rich explanatory framework for the empirical phenomenon of women and households taking on additional burdens in wartime despite the depletion of their resources and time as a result of austerity budgets. By combining feminist political economy and security approaches to examine the case of Ukraine, this article reveals the intersection of the gendered processes of IFI conditionalities and militarization and the ways that they reinforce each other to undermine women's economic security.

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