

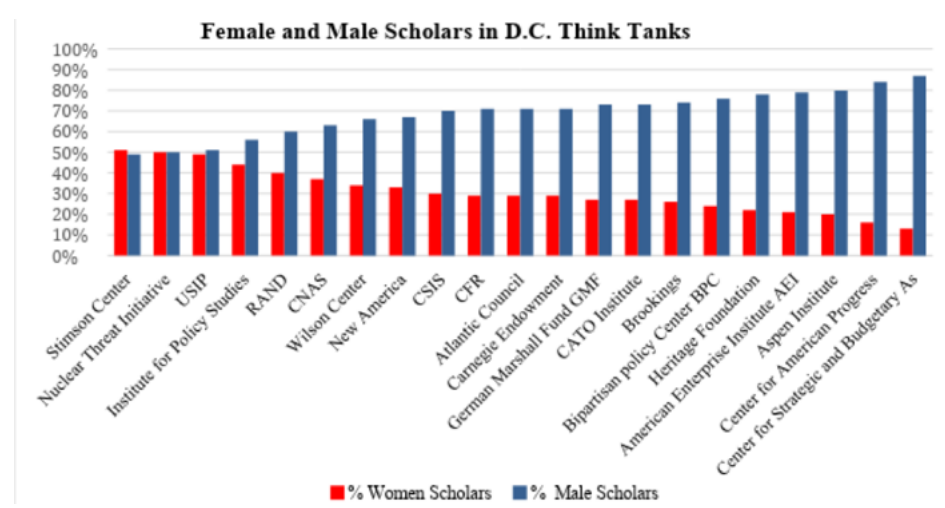


Culture & Society

Missing in Action: The Absence of Women Scholars on Foreign Policy Panels

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Women in International Security (WIS), an organization committed to advancing women in the field of international peace and security, recently issued a policy report analyzing the presence of women in D.C. think tanks, compiling a ranking of the presence of women scholars in the foreign policy community. The report, titled “The WIS Scorecard: Washington, DC Think Tanks 2018,” highlighted how men are still running the show in the foreign and security policy establishments. The D.C. think tank community is in fact far from being gender-balanced, especially when it comes to foreign policy. Expert-wise, only two out of the twenty-two think tanks reviewed have achieved gender parity among their scholars: the Stimson Center (52%) and the United States Institute for Peace (USIP, 49%). Only five think tanks have more than 40% female scholars: the Stimson Center (51%), Nuclear Threat Initiative (50%), the U.S. Institute for Peace (49%), the Institute for Policy Studies (44%), and the Rand Corporation (40%). The vast majority of the think tanks have less than 30% female scholars.



These findings are consistent with the numbers in academia, where women scholars in International Relations are still a minority: 70 percent of International Relations (IR) faculty, [is male](#). The discrimination begins early in one's career: for instance, among PhDs at the country's top institution, Harvard, 5 percent of males are in IR as opposed to two percent of females. Discrimination continues to occur throughout one's career: despite women constituting half of the graduate population in political science, they constitute only 10 percent of IR faculty. They are also less likely to work at research universities: more women IR scholars (48 percent) teach at liberal arts colleges or universities without Ph.D. programs than men (39 percent). Women also tend to be more junior and less likely to hold tenure than their male colleagues and [just a minority achieve senior positions such as Full Chair](#).

Women IR scholars' work is not as well-recognized as that of male IR scholars—a problem for the whole of political science, as women are significantly underrepresented on the list of the 400 most frequently-cited political scientists and are cited less often than their male colleagues. Men also out-publish women by [a ratio of two to one](#). The majority of the research assigned in IR graduate courses is [written by men](#).

In the peculiar D.C. environment, however, citations are only one part of the problem. In the nation's capital, what counts above all else is visibility, and the first step toward increased visibility is being invited to speak on panels. This article thus explores gender equality on foreign policy panels in the Nation's Capital think tanks community.

From a methodological point of view, we started from the mentioned WIS report and selected the top 20 institutions it cited. Our hypothesis was that think tanks that are more gender-balanced in terms of scholars would also be more gender-balanced in terms of panel composition. For foreign policy-focused think tanks, we considered each public event they listed on their websites in 2018. In the case of multidisciplinary think tanks, we only considered their panels on foreign policy. For each event, we looked at the roster listed on the program, such as speakers, chairs, and moderators, as well as the total number of speakers and number of women speakers.

We also looked into the ideological divide. To determine whether a think tank is leaning Democratic, leaning Republican or is Independent/Bipartisan, we looked at think tanks' values and mission statements, in particular looking for terms such as “conservative”, “progressive”, and “bipartisan”. We are grateful to the European Commission's Jean Monnet Action, for support in doing this research. This research project is part of a larger international research initiative on Women Leaders in Foreign Policy and International Relations led by the Institute for Women Policy Research.

Think Tank	% Women Speakers
RAND	25%
Council for Foreign Relations (CFR)	48%
Center for American Progress	48%
United States Institute for Peace (USIP)	47%
Center for New American Security (CNAS)	42%
Stimson Center	40%
Heritage Foundation	37%
Brookings Institution	34%
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)	33%
Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI)	33%
Institute for Policy Studies	33%
New America Foundation	30%
Wilson Center	30%
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP)	29%
Aspen Institute	28%
German Marshall Fund (GMF)	27%
Heritage Foundation	24%
American Enterprise Institute AEI	20%
CATO Institute	20%
Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC)	19%
Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA)	11%

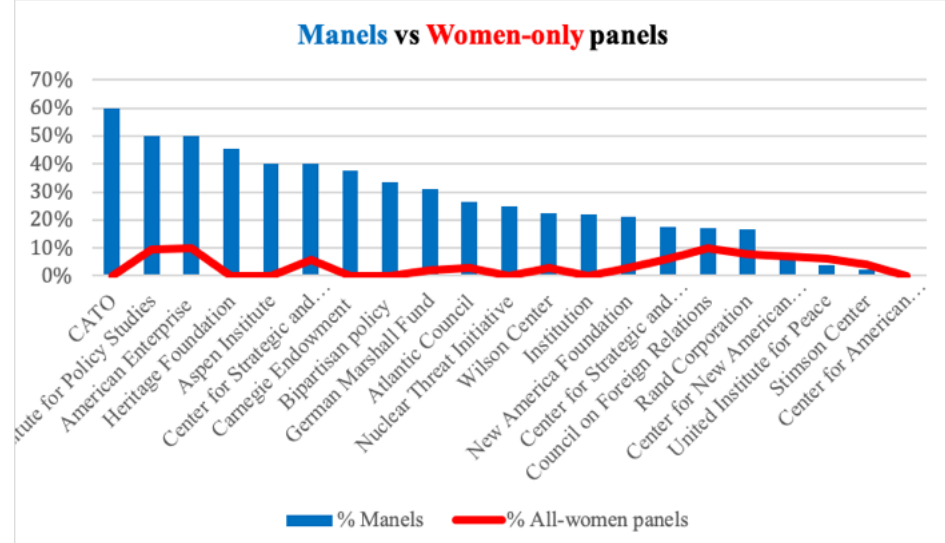
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The results are far from encouraging: in 2018, there was one woman for every three males on D.C. foreign policy panels. Additionally, 27 percent of the panels were in fact “manels”, a term used to refer to men-only panels. To make things worse, in most cases, the woman on the panel was the moderator, not a “real” speaker. This perpetuates the idea that women can be gracious hosts, but not experts.

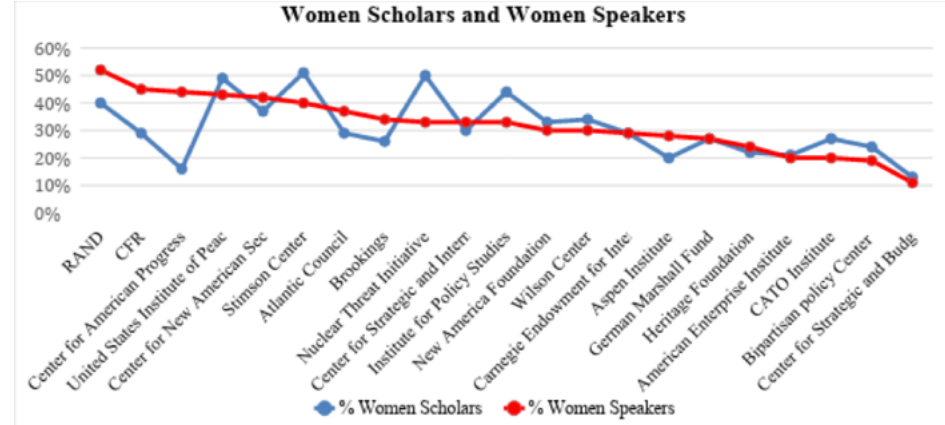
RAND exceeded gender parity on panels, closely followed by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Center for American Progress, the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP), the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), and the Stimson Center, all of whose panels consisted of 40 percent or more women. Only the Center for American Progress completely avoided organizing one-gendered panels. For the rest, out of 967 foreign policy panels, 217 were manels.

In other words, in 27 percent of the cases, the organizers were apparently unable—or unwilling—to put at least one woman on stage. At CATO, the Institute for Policy Studies, and the American Enterprise Institute, half or more of the panels were all-male. At CATO, the Heritage Foundation, Aspen Institute, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Bipartisan Policy Center, one third or more of the events were all-male, yet they did not organize one single all-women panel.

It should also be mentioned that several of the women-only panels were either held on International Women's Day or focused on topics like sexual violence or civil suffering. Another interesting finding is that there were only a few think tanks that would do an event around a single woman (such as a global leader), or a single female scholar, while there was an abundance of events revolving around one single male leader or scholar.



The correlation between the presence of women experts and the percentage of women speakers exists, but is weaker than expected: the think tanks with the most women scholars are not always the ones featuring the most women speakers.

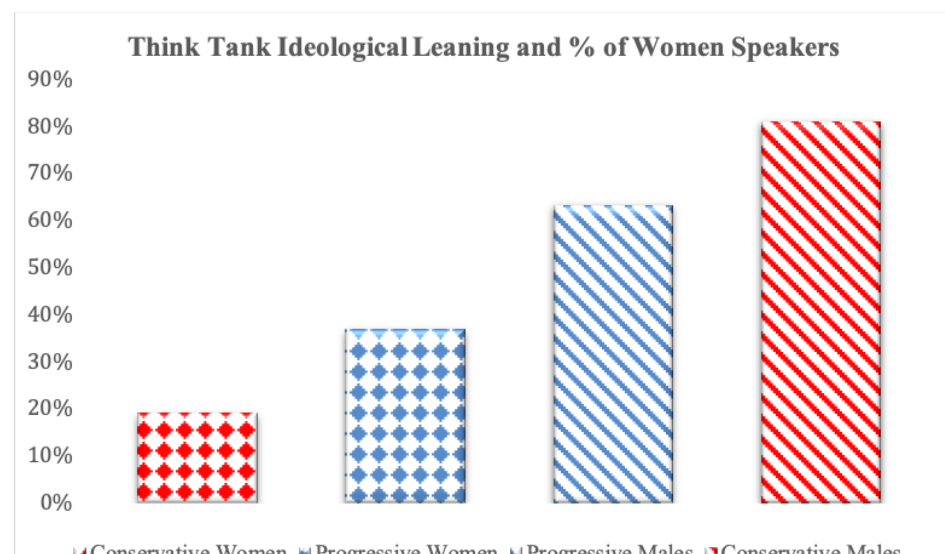


While only 40 percent of scholars at RAND are women, RAND exceeded gender parity in panels (52 percent). The Center for Foreign Relations, with a figure of only 29 percent female scholars, almost reached gender parity on panels (44 percent). The same holds true for the Center for American Progress: with just 16 percent of female scholars, the panels averaged 44 percent of women. The United States Institute for Peace with 49 percent of its scholars being women, had panels that were 43 percent women, similar to the Stimson Center (51 percent female scholars, 40 percent on panels). At the lower levels of the ranking—that is the think tanks with 30 percent or less of female scholars—the correlation is somewhat stronger: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace scored 29 percent in both categories with the German Marshall Fund closely behind with 27 percent in both categories. Heritage featured 22 and 24 percent respectively, and American Enterprise 21 and 20 percent. The Aspen Institute featured more female speakers than scholars (28 percent vs. 20 percent), while CATO did the opposite. With 27 female experts, only 20 percent of its speakers were women.

The correlation between female leadership and gender parity is promising. Seven out of the twenty-one think tanks (30 percent) considered in this study have a woman at the helm: Neera Tandon (CAP), Nancy Lindborg (USIP), Victoria Nuland (CNAS), Anne Marie Slaughter (New America Foundation), Jane Harman (Wilson Center), Karen Donfried (GMF) and Joan Rohlfing (NYI). Yet only three of these appear in the top-ten think tanks when it comes to women speakers on panels: Center for American Progress, U.S. Institute for Peace, and the Center for New American Security.

Rank	Think Tank	% of Women Experts	% of Women Speakers	President / CEO
1	RAND	40%	52%	Michael Roth (President/CEO)
2	Council for Foreign Relations	29%	45%	Richard Haass (President)
3	Center for American Progress	16%	44%	Neera Tandon (President)
4	U.S. Institute for Peace	49%	43%	Nancy Lindborg (President)
5	Center for New American Security (CNAS)	37%	42%	Victoria Nuland (CEO)

Finally, there appears to be a progressive-conservative divide, with openly-progressive think tanks clearly surpassing openly-conservative ones when it comes to gender parity of speakers: among conservative think tanks, just 18 percent of panel participants are women, as compared to 59 percent among progressive ones. Independent think tanks score in the middle.



An article published in the *Monkey Cage*, a blog by *The Washington Post*, illustrates how, in 2014, only one in four panelists on foreign policy panels in D.C. were women. Increasing the percent of female speakers is admittedly easier than reaching gender parity among scholars. Given all the pledges to never again participate in manels that followed the *Monkey Cage* article, one would expect trends to have substantially changed, and to some extent, they have. Since 2014, the presence of women on foreign policy panels in Washington, D.C. has grown by nine percent, increasing from 25 percent to 34 percent. With this level of growth, gender parity on foreign policy panels in D.C. will be achieved by 2025.

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