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Women in US Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Policy Making

There appears to be a consensus that women are underrepresented in the nuclear policy community and need to be included more (e.g. Hurlburt et al 2019; Minor 2017). Many initiatives and studies explain mechanisms that exclude women (e.g. Bindi and Giamanco 2019; Cohn 1987, Hurlburt et al 2019) and/or develop new ways to include more women voices (e.g. S/RES/1325; Kazi 2014; Sinovets 2014). Calls for the inclusion of women perspectives are voiced by think tanks (e.g. Collina and Wagner 2019) and diplomats (e.g.; A/RES/67/48; A/RES/68/33; NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP:48) and either refer to the normative goal of equality in the representation of the world's population or embrace the functionalist argument that more women would improve nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy making.

However, so far, only few studies have provided empirical evidence that demonstrates how women have shaped nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policies (e.g. Borrie et al 2016:29; Hurlburt et al 2019:29). My research contributes to this research gap with an analysis of the role of women in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy making during Barack Obama's administrations.

During US President Barack Obama's presidency, women worked in various central positions in the nuclear policy sector. More women represented the US in UN disarmament forums and women occupied positions that were significant for the development of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament policies: Wendy Sherman, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, led the US negotiating team during talks between the P5+1, European Union and Iran, Rose Gottemoeller acted as Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs, Hillary Clinton represented the US as Secretary of State and Susan Rice worked as National Security Advisor. Many of these women have (policy) backgrounds in the field of arms control negotiations that equipped them with creative approaches and innovative ideas about non-proliferation and disarmament. For instance, Wendy Sherman's involvement in multilateral nuclear negotiations dates back to the Clinton administration while Rose Gottemoeller helped to negotiate the New START accord with Russia.

My research project conducts an in-depth case study analysis of the role of women in US nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy making. It addresses two questions: First, which innovative ideas and policy visions have women in Obama's administration brought into nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy making? Second, how have these ideas been reflected in US nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policies?

One of US President Obama's most prominent legacies has been his famous commitment to work towards a world without nuclear weapons (Obama 2009). This research project sets out to show that the US president was not the sole determinant of US nuclear policies. A group of women in central policy positions also worked to create new visions for nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. By focusing on their ideas and influence, this research seeks to provide empirical support that can strengthen calls for the inclusion of more women in nuclear policy sectors.

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