

Army War College program examines complex nature of women in governmental leadership worldwide

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 10 March 2022



Dr. Madison Schramm, USAWC assistant professor of National Security, engaged with students about complex nature of women in governmental leadership worldwide, February 23.

The Regional Studies Program at the Army War College curriculum exposes students to a wide range of issues facing the people, governments, and militaries in specific regions of the globe. In support of Regional Studies learning, students delved into the issue of women's political representation from a cross-regional perspective, Feb. 23.

Dr. Madison Schramm, USAWC assistant professor of National Security, engaged with students on the topic, sharing insights from her ongoing research. She argued that to make sense of International Relations, one should think about gender and women's representation, because this creates new dynamics and incentives that broadly impact global security, economics, and policy.

Schramm recommends that military leaders think critically about the complexities of representation of women in leadership. National and international governments have come a long way but still have a long way to go, she said.

A nation's instability may increase both elite and public demand for women in leadership positions, with contrasting implications. On the one hand, women are assumed often to possess communitarian traits, said Schramm. They are perceived as more nurturing, kind, and warm, qualities are more likely to be valued following domestic instability.

Yet, although women will be favored for leadership positions because they are seen as better managers of people, women also function as convenient scapegoats if the organization fails. Schramm described this as the glass cliff, the idea that when women break through the glass ceiling, they will face significant obstacles to their success.

In terms of armed conflict, it is often assumed that women are less likely to initiate conflict because they are normatively seen as peacemakers. This difference in conflict initiation between men and women in executive office initiation disappears when women are more politically empowered, she noted from her research.

Further, negative, exclusionary narratives about gender make women more vulnerable to corruption allegations and charges, she said

Schramm's current research projects include gender and interstate conflict, gender and ethnic diversity in post-conflict states, gender dynamics in leadership selection and removal, and the exclusion of women from the International Relations canon. She holds a Ph.D. in Government from Georgetown University.