Central European Subalterns Speak Security (Too): Towards a Truly Post-Western Feminist Security Studies[1]

Introduction

In early February 2022, we published a piece centred around the argument that the discipline of Feminist Security Studies (FSS) resembles a Western academics' club and needs to effectively include voices beyond the 'core' of academic knowledge production (Krulišová and O'Sullivan 2022). Coming from a region barely visible to the FSS core, we thought that critiquing the politics of knowledge production in our discipline was timely. With the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine just a few weeks later, our argument about the absence of Central and Eastern European (CEE) feminist voices in FSS became much more acute. Some reactions to the invasion have laid the Western feminist knowledge production hegemony bare, with all its silences, exclusions, and biases.

As Central European FSS scholars, we have felt increasingly uneasy about being 'in-between' the deepening divisions in East-West feminist debates. During more than a year of Russia's genocidal war against Ukraine (Azarov et al 2023; Dudko 2022), we have attempted to bridge these divisions by engaging in multiple activities to amplify the voices of Ukrainian feminists and bring to the fore the CEE perspectives on Russian imperialism, including our own. While appreciating the strong regional feminist solidarity, we have experienced disappointment and frustration with *some* Western feminist voices.[2] We fully share the disillusionment of CEE feminists about Western feminist responses to the Russian war on Ukraine (Graff 2022) and feel the responsibility to continue challenging Western epistemic practices.

In this paper, we hope to join conversations on epistemic silences and further deepening of East-West inequalities in Feminist International Relations (IR) and its FSS subdiscipline (Blaney and Tickner 2017; Causevitz et al 2020; Stavrevska et al 2023). This debate echoes the calls for 'worlding IR' or moving towards 'post-Western IR' which long omitted the questions around knowledge production in CEE (Mälksoo 2021). The discussion in FSS similarly oscillates around knowledge exchanges between the Global North and South (Basu 2013; Shepherd 2013; Medie and Kang 2018). In those conversations, the boundary between the North and South is never defined; it is assumed that the reader simply knows. These boundaries, like so many others, are drawn along the lines of power (Parashar 2013).

We strive to speak our truth to this power by extending the FSS conversation to the East-West feminist knowledge hierarchies. These unequal power relationships affect whose knowledge is considered excellent, whose voices are amplified or silenced, and who impacts national and international policy. Following the well-established feminist legacy of autoethnographic research, we argue that the sudden 'Eastern turn' among some Western feminists has at times resulted in irresponsible and troubling 'Westsplaining',[3] and harmful projections of knowledge considered as universally valid. Building on postcolonial and decolonial approaches, we argue that these Western epistemic practices of marginalization and silencing of the CEE Subaltern/Other are a continuation of the long-lacking intellectual foundation, solidarity and understanding of CEE in FSS.

Abiding by the principle of feminist reflexivity requires us to 're-interrogate continually [our] own scholarship' (Brooke, Stern and True 2006: 4), we embrace the openness and vulnerability that autoethnography builds upon (Brigg and Bleiker 2010: 794). We examine our experiences through recorded conversations taken over five years of working together, tracing the moments of discomfort, frustration, fear, joy and solidarity. Mälksoo's (2021) 'captive minds' allegory which questions whether the 'EE [Eastern European] subalterns can speak security' and 'how the EE subjects are listened to, heard and understood in the field' helps us make feminist sense of our experiences. The question

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about listening, hearing and understanding became increasingly urgent for us. Reflecting on our peculiar position of 'partial privilege' (Kalmar 2022) coexisting alongside levels of epistemic marginalization, we put ourselves in the centre stage of Enloe's (2014) discipline-defining questions: Where are the CEE women in FSS scholarship? What do we think of ourselves being there?

Dauphinee (2010: 808) reminds us that reflecting on why we write is key; similar to her, we write because we realised that 'something is not the way [we] thought it was'. We write out of solidarity with our CEE sisters, who are impacted by the Russian genocidal aggression. We cannot fathom the loss, tragedy, and trauma that Ukrainians face every day. What we can do, however, is use our 'partial privilege' (Kalmar 2022) of scholars from, in, and, importantly, away from the semi-periphery to highlight the issues of epistemic marginalization CEE feminists are facing. Using self as a source of knowledge, we hope that some of our experiences may resonate with the feminist security community and beyond.

FSS is more than our disciplinary home; we see it as a community of scholars who have not only provided valuable professional advice, but also provided support amidst our domestic 'malestream' academic culture. Yet, some of the reactions that followed the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the continuing war waged against the bodies, territory, language, and culture of Ukrainians made us realise that we must speak up. We speak up with discomfort. We worry about coming across as self-indulgent or narcissistic (Ettorre 2016). We worry about being dismissed by scholars we admire. We fear being ignored. Yet, none of those fears are comparable to the deeply seated collective memory and traumas that many Central and Eastern Europeans are forced to relive. We hope that our examinations of disciplinary knowledge/power may play a role in transforming it into a post-Western and truly decolonial community of scholars.

Our discussion proceed as follows. First, we link the postcolonial and decolonial approaches to knowledge production with issues of the peripheralization and rationalization of Europe's East in Western disciplines. We then discuss our positionality and experiences in relation to knowledge production in FSS. We identify the triple burden of being women, feminists, and Central Europeans. In the next part, we reflect on our frustration with some of the epistemic practices of Western feminists who have spoken over CEE and erased local voices in their responses to the Russian war on Ukraine. Finally, we conclude that FSS is at a critical point and must change its epistemic practices.

East of the West: The In-betweenness, Racialization and Peripheralization of CEE

Feminist scholars working at the intersection of postcolonial and post-socialist thought show the complex positionality of CEE. The region is often conceptualized as being outside or in-between the North-South binary (Koobak et al 2021; Tlostanova 2012; Blagojevic 2004). Kulawik (2021: 1) describes a velvet border in European feminist knowledge production; Eastern Europe is transmuted from the Second World to the second 'Other' of Europe, existing next to the Western center. The often-posed question 'Can the Postsocialist Speak' (Suchland 2011: 842) remains ever more relevant and urgent for all disciplines including IR, Feminist IR, and our own FSS.

The lack of CEE voices in the IR discipline is well mapped by JIRD's special issue named 'Uses of the 'East' in International Studies' (2021). In it, Mälksoo (2021: 812) also adopts the concept of in-betweenness, arguing that CEE's 'difference vis-à-vis the IR mainstream is too minor compared to the voices emerging from the post-colonial global South'; and, at the same time, '[CEE's] experience with colonialism and imperialism [is] too distinct from that of the global South' (Ibid). The critique of

unequal production in IR focuses not only on structural and material inequalities but also on the ways of portraying CEE. Lovec et al (2021: 891) show how CE states, labelled as 'newcomers from the East', are often stigmatized as 'problematic children of Europe'. Studies highlighting issues of illiberalism, democratic backsliding, and racism indeed dominate the academic debates on the region (Guasti and Bustikova 2023). Scholars interested in gender and politics often note the strength of anti-gender movements and gender conservatism of the region (Krizsán and Roggeband 2020). All of these are very relevant and must be analyzed. Yet, they at the same time appear to serve as an invitation for Western scholars to speak over CEE and reinforce this stigmatization without accounting for their own epistemic biases and silences. We link the tendency to 'Westsplain' (Sonevytsky 2022; Tsymbalyuk 2022) to the ongoing peripheralization and racialization of the 'East' Europe.

Kalmar (2022, 6, 11) conceptualises CE in terms of semi-periphery and partial privilege, noting that Central Europeans are 'white but not enough'. Safuta (2018) shows the people from CEE are seen as 'peripherally white'. While Central Europeans are more privileged than people from the global South and do not experience the same level of racism compared to people of colour, they are simultaneously not granted full privileges of whiteness (Kalmar 2022, 11). The region has also been an active participant of what Balogun (2022: 465) terms as global colonial economy and remains 'connected to the benefits of white supremacy'. Parvulescu (2015: 30) applies racial triangulation to Europe, arguing that East Europe is Europe's 'semi-colonial site'. In other words, CEE is seen as being in-between the black and white, coloniser and colonised binary. Lewicki (2022: 14) argues that 'the racialisation of 'Eastern Europeans' is co-constitutive of the political-economic peripheralization of the region.' This is in line with the regional feminist critiques that highlights the continued semi-peripheral status of feminist knowledge produced by CEE scholars (Marling 2021; Koobak et al 2021).

Similar epistemic inequalities emerge in feminist security research, as knowledge from/on CEE region has rarely appeared as part of FSS, having very little, if any, influence over the discipline (Krulišová and O'Sullivan 2022). FSS as a discipline remains to be dominated by knowledge produced in Northwestern Europe, North America and Australia (Ibid). While there are calls to include voices from the Global South (Basu 2013; Parashar 2013), the disciplinary knowledge continues to be centered around predominantly white and institutionally privileged voices. Henry (2021: 22) argues that knowledge on Women, Peace and Security, one of the key topics in FSS, originates from the 'geo-epistemic home of the global north'. Similarly, Haastrup and Hagen (2021: 28) note how 'mundanity and hegemony of whiteness […] is reinforced when places outside of the global north are viewed as objects of study, not locations of knowledge production in their own right.' Parashar (2020: 24) calls this 'normative whiteness'; Dahl (2021) notes that in Nordic feminism, whiteness is an 'epistemic habit'. Barthwal-Datta (2013: 4) reflects on navigating this normative/epistemic whiteness, noting that 'racialized and feminized bodies are simultaneously (hyper)visible and invisible' within white western academy. From the perspective of CEE, Khromeychuk (2022a) boldly states that she is denied credibility because she is 'female, young, east European'. We, too, have come to recognise that our actual and perceived 'East Europeanness' defines our academic trajectories.

Triple Burden: A Feminist Academic in-between East and West

Our journey towards FSS has been shaped by who we are: women, feminists, and scholars from the CE semi-periphery. This 'triple burden' keeps impacting our positions amidst the intersecting hierarchies of power in neo-liberal academia combined with epistemic injustices of the wider IR discipline. We are women working in/on a masculine CE environment resistant to feminist input and prone to anti-gender tendencies, who simultaneously seek to be heard, listened to, and understood by Western FSS.

As IR students from 2000s onwards, we rarely learned in our lectures about feminist IR, yet alone FSS (Sondarjee 2022). The Czech IR has remained a predominantly masculine field (Nyklová et al. 2019) shaped by great power theorizing through knowledge produced by mostly male, predominantly Western, rarely feminist, authors. Given this absence of feminist approaches, we had to find our own way by turning to Western feminist IR. We have often found ourselves rejected and discouraged by Czech scholars. Kateřina was told she will never get an academic post if her PhD is on feminist topic. While teaching at a Czech university, her optional module on 'Gender and Security' was mocked by colleagues as well as management and attended mostly by exchange students. Once she moved institutions, a decision based partly on environment bent on undermining her work, the module was simply discontinued. Míla has had more institutional support but still felt the conservative nature of Czech IR. She recently encountered a grant rejection where reviewer commented that a research project focused on gender, security and diplomacy reviewed already amidst the gendered impacts of Russian invasion of Ukraine should be left for 'better times'. The multiple instances of rejection deepened our imposter syndrome. While our relative institutional power might have slightly increased with recognition of our recent publications (O'Sullivan and Krulišová 2023) in the research rating schemes of our respective institutions, we still see ourselves as marginalized in Czech academic circles.

As self-learners of FSS, we desperately lacked feminist security mentors from the region. While there is plenty of well-established gender studies or sociology scholars, the then-perceived disciplinary boundary prevented us from seeking their help. As a result, we both became what Mälksoo (2021: 812) calls 'ardent disciples of the West'. Some of our earlier work thus reproduces Western bias and whiteness (Henry 2013). Until recently, we uncritically adopted 'Western' FSS and applied concepts and theories developed by feminists from the 'core' to studying the 'periphery'. We showed that CEE feminists can *speak* security, but were hesitant to write about the region. One Czech scholar warned us that 'no one [in IR academic community] really cares about this case study'. CEE did not appear to be on IR or FSS mental maps (Khromeychuk 2022b). Overcoming this semi-periphery inferiority complex was not easy.

We have been preoccupied with publishing work that would fit within the established epistemic center and high-impact international [read Global North] journals. The peer-review process taught us to water down our critique of 'Western' feminism and reference well-established FSS scholars. When writing on the Czech or Ukrainian WPS agenda, we felt the pressure to link our findings to global context and Western theorizing. By doing so, the uniqueness of the region somewhat disappeared; for the Western-dominated FSS knowledge production, a Czech WPS case study is simply not the same by itself, compared to a case study on UK WPS or Swedish feminist foreign policy.

Amid this ongoing domestic marginalization and inferiority complex, we have found the FSS community very supportive. A number of scholars have provided us with extremely valuable mentorship and opportunities (Hall et al 2019; Martin de Almagro and Ryan 2020; Shepherd 2020; Stern and Towns 2022; Hoijtink et al. forthcoming). Yet, with the growing body of postcolonial debates on CEE, we became more aware of our own CE positionality vis-à-vis Western FSS. We have started to pay more attention to whether and how we as the CEE subjects are listened to, heard and understood. Through more concerted engagement with CE's feminists from other disciplines, we have come to recognize that the Global East[4] scholarship continues to be peripheral to FSS.

This peripherilization is perhaps most visible in FSS' geographical foci and practices of citation. The majority of the handbooks on gender and war/peace/security/governance (include some topics and scholars from the Global South, but almost none on/from CEE (see Krulišová and O'Sullivan 2022). Indeed, these epistemic practices appear to be repeated with every new volume. This only further

amplifies the construction of FSS 'in the image of White Western femininity' (Shepherd 2013: 438). By not actively using their disciplinary and geopolitical privilege to effectively include CEE voices, FSS risks being seen as employing the same methods of the 'malestream' IR it critiques and marginalizing feminist voices. Indeed, Duriesmith (2020: 29) calls feminist IR to adopt strategic silence towards the malestream which would 'create space to center [feminist IR] endeavors in relation to other bodies of work, other frameworks, and other sites of conversation (globally).' While not letting 'friends cite the malestream' (Duriesmith 2020: 26) might be a good start of challenging global epistemic inequalities of the wider discipline, it is nearly not enough. FSS academics must go beyond their established friend groups to use their privilege towards more equitable knowledge exchange. They must not only avoid and call out Westsplaining, but actively use their relative privilege and amplify the voices of local scholars. This work will be hard. It might result in rejection or feelings of discomfort and disorientation, but it is necessary.

Solidarity, Discomfort and Frustration: Encountering Westsplaining

As we finalise this article, Russian war on Ukraine has continued for more than a year and a half. This time has been filled with loss, anger, anxiety and disbelief. As scholars, it brought us numerous moments of frustration and discomfort with some of the reactions coming from the Western FSS, although we have also found a lot of joy in moments of intense CEE feminist solidarity. While the Russian invasion has finally put CEE, and Ukraine specifically, on the mental map[5] for some FSS scholars, FSS' key commitments to intersectionality, anti-imperialism, and centring local knowledge have been absent in some reactions to this presumed Other/subaltern. We have felt the urgency to serve as critical friends to some FSS scholars who hurried to speak up only to reproduce the malestream epistemic harms they themselves criticize. There continues to be lack of understanding of the region long impacted by Russian imperialism. We observe that hierarchies of FSS knowledge production manifest themselves in expressions of privileged pacifism, practices of invitation/inclusion, and politics of citation.

Reflecting on this period, we recognize that supporting CEE feminist solidarity by 'speaking' security to Western feminists, given our own relatively disadvantaged position within FSS and IR, is both intellectually and emotionally exhausting. We see ourselves as being part of FSS, yet are not moving in the same elite circles partly due to our career stage, location and perhaps focus. We suspect that writing from CEE 'non-region' on CEE gendered insecurities 'might have something to do with that. Our institutions are not the Western 'Centres of Excellence' (Haastrup and Hagen 2021), we do not hold prestigious grants or fellowships. In other words, we are not fully part of the FSS 'camp' (Sylvester 2010). Our exhaustion, however, does not concern our position within FSS hierarchy; rather, it stems from realisation that although it must now be very clear that CEE feminist Subalterns 'speak' security, in fact they speak it loud and clear, they are seldom heard and listened to. We still feel the urgency to challenge what we consider to be harmful knowledge – epistemic practices of Western exceptionalism based on knowledge extraction, exclusions, silencing and othering which approach CEE in a colonial and racialized way. While we might not be the most authoritative FSS voices, we are still part of some FSS discussions. Our contracts are permanent and relatively secure, we do have the means to engage with the 'West' – be it knowledge of the English language as lingua Franca, academic conventions, or ability to travel. This gives us significant amount of privilege. We also have embodied knowledge and intergenerational experience of Russian imperialism and its legacies. Our urge to challenge the inequalities of knowledge production adheres to Khromeychuk's (2022b) argument that knowledge is not only a matter of power but also, importantly, security. Knowledge produced and disseminated in

academic fora influences international responses to the war and can therefore become a life or death sentence.

We have repeatedly highlighted the absence of CEE and specifically Ukrainian voices in Western feminist panels and suggested speakers including in events focused on anti-gender politics, conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine, or Russia's gendered disinformation. These Western practices of exclusion of those directly impacted by Russian imperial aggression have contributed to extraction of knowledge[6] from the region and speaking over Ukraine as well as to many misunderstandings about the imperial nature of the invasion manifested in the pacifist calls. Sonevytsky's (2022) term epistemic imperialism refers to such practices which privilege epistemic authority of the West. Indeed, Ukrainian and CEE feminists have repeatedly responded to the 'abstract' and 'privileged' pacifism and called for an informed feminist solidarity with Ukraine's resistance including through military support(The Feminist Initiative Group 2022; Tsymbaliuk and Zamurieva 2022; Ukraine Peace Appeal 2023). The feminist debate around pacifism and militarisation, with origins in early 20th century then colonial powers, has long omitted the insecurity experiences of people oppressed by imperial aggression and is indeed, from our perspective, one of the key discussions feminists should engage in. This is bound to be a very difficult conversation. Sylvester (2010: 609) reminds us that 'feminism has positioned itself outside war, above it, and in ethical belligerence to it'. For people finding themselves inside this war, such position is unimageable and hurtful.

To address these exclusions and epistemic harms, in May 2022 Míla organized a panel with Ukrainian feminists, who gave a clear message about the need to define peace and security from the perspectives of those that have been colonized (IIR 2022). The very high attendance of this online event by Western participants showed certain willingness to 'listen.' Reflecting on this a year later, however, shows that active and empathetic listening and overcoming of differences has not materialized. On the contrary, the East-West divide has deepened with almost every current conversations led by Western feminist scholars and activists on the topic of Russia and Ukraine which now dominates the wider IR discipline.[7] In the interest of bridging the East-West divisions, we do not wish to engage in practices of 'shaming' others and thus decided to refrain from referencing these occasions. In the second year of the invasion, a number of events has been organized by Western FSS scholars on feminist perspectives on war, security and peace, feminist foreign policies or militarism remained Western-only clubs. This pattern is often replicated by international governmental and non-governmental organisations. Such events continue to pop up on our social media feeds. Every time they do, we ask ourselves how and why this keeps happening. How does an all-Western panel discussion on Ukraine differ from a 'male' we all snigger and roll our eyes at? If Ukrainian feminists are invited, why do they speak only after their Western privileged sisters made their points on Ukraine? Why do Western feminists even chair such panels? What happened to feminist reflexivity?

Dauphinee (2010: 802) notes our wider discipline is 'built on the deaths and losses of others, and these are deaths and losses that we never personally experience.' We have observed that indeed some feminists have used the suffering of others to further their academic careers. The wider region of CEE has quickly transformed from an overlooked and ignored part of the world to one on which Western expertise is to be applied on. Some scholars, including those who label themselves as feminists, do this without reflecting on their privileged status of an authoritative expert voice. As a result, some commentaries produced lack deep knowledge of the region and fail to highlight the existing work of local feminists. The politics and ethics of citation (Duriesmith 2020) is too often not adhered to. Local scholarship, most of which is available in English and draws on embodied knowledge and in-depth empirical research has been missed or extracted (Sonevytsky 2022). Failing to engage with existing feminist CEE scholarship and activism, Western feminists reinforce CEE as the Other European without

epistemic authority, including in its relation to NATO, EU, or as a subject of feminist foreign policy. We find it disturbing that amidst the ongoing genocidal violence, some leading postcolonial feminist scholars and peace activists argue against arming Ukraine or speak of US-led NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. Not only have they not 'lived' Russian imperialism, but deny voices to those currently experiencing it in the most brutal forms. These practices appear to be linked to epistemic imperialism (Sonevytsky 2022) and hegemonic whiteness (Henry 2021), lack of reflexivity, and perhaps the ever-intensifying neoliberalization of academia which forces one to be visible and relevant. When CEE is mentioned by Western feminists, it is typically linked to racism, xenophobia, homophobia and sexism. It tends to be portrayed as land of 'anti-gender states' which erases local agency and strong feminist tradition in the region. The sudden change in attitudes to Ukrainian refugees is flattened and simplified to them 'having blonde hair and blue eyes' which overshadows the complexity of Ukraine's decolonial struggle as well as systemic exploitation in Europe (Hendl 2022). While racism, homophobia and sexism are urgent and persistent problems, the local scholarship provides a much richer and more nuanced understanding of gender orders, collective memory, socioeconomic hierarchies and regional anti-imperialist politics (Kulawik et al. 2020). Ignoring this complexity produces not only bad, but harmful, arguments, and produces knowledge devoid of analytical depth. What is more, none of these feminists appear to critique Western treatment of Ukrainians including long-term labour exploitation or potential of sexual exploitation of vulnerable refugees in Western countries (Lyubchenko 2022; Euronews 2023). Hagen et al (2023) note that practicing refusal is key component of reflexivity. As such, learning to say 'no' to media requests or panel invitations, and recommending CEE scholars will lead to more equitable and in-depth public discussions.

Ahmed (2017: 15) further reminds us that 'citation is a feminist memory'. It might take Western FSS more time and effort to engage with interdisciplinary feminist work from CEE, which seems a very little price to pay for ensuring local knowledge is not erased from this collective feminist memory. It might take even more time and work to reflect on one's biases. If FSS indeed cares about improving lives rather than scholarly profit, it must stop erasing local voices and take local feminists' agency and self-determination seriously. This erasure does not only lie in failure to cite or invite local activists and scholars to the numerous panels, conferences, and forums. This failure manifests in inability or unwillingness to listen to what some may consider contradictory to their long-held beliefs. The 'privileged pacifists', theorising about war waged by and on the people they never met from the comfort of their university offices, must recognize that by speaking over people who fight for their lives right now, they risk reproducing the malestream epistemic violence and Western exceptionalism they fight against. Until that happens, Western FSS will remain detached from the ground and from the very feminist idea of improving people's lives.

Concluding Thoughts: Towards Truly Post-Western FSS

We started this reflection with a sigh of disappointment. We are ending with a plea. We invite Western scholars and activists, some of whom are leading feminist voices, to reflect on their own biases towards the region, and actively listen and learn from people who have lived Russian imperialism and for whom this invasion is a question of life or death. FSS is our home. We had to find our own way into becoming part of this home, which was not always easy. We are determined to stay in it, but the past year and a half has shown that its ethical foundations might not be as stable as we once thought. We argued that FSS remains a White Western feminist project of fully privileged academics that often reproduces malestream epistemic and institutional practices it seeks to criticize. The principles of intersectionality, anti-imperialism, reflexivity, inclusivity, and solidarity appear to be shaken by the continuing East-West divisions. These manifest themselves by some privileged voices' tendencies to

speak over, misunderstand, extract or silence CEE experiences. If FSS wants to be truly inclusive and transnational, this must stop.

There might be different reasons for some Western feminists' tendencies to speak over CEE and erase local voices. Whether it is their belief in 'privileged pacifism', the feeling of exceptionalism rooted in their belongingness to the academic 'core', neoliberal academia's push to make present oneself as an 'expert' on anything remotely related to one's actual expertise, or simply because the Russian war on Ukraine has had unprecedented international consequences beyond the CEE region, we call on them to practice their feminist reflexivity better. They should realize that all these epistemic practices lead to the same failure to utilize the agency of Ukrainian women (Philips and Martsenyuk 2023) and the strong CEE feminist solidarity (Hendl 2022). As a result, these practices remain detached from feminism on the ground and, serve to re-marginalize local voices who are living the insecurity. We agree with Hozić and Restrepo Sanín (2022) that feminist scholars and activists, enjoying the comforts of the West, have a lot to learn from their Ukrainian counterparts. CEE feminist networks are working hard to push their governments and international organizations to adopt locally informed feminist responses to the war and its aftermath which are urgently needed and cannot be meaningfully supported by only Western informed feminist knowledge. This is not an easy task; we all know that. Yet, it is the CEE activists and scholars who understand the complexity of the regional and local gender orders. We have lived this insecurity and we are best equipped to speak it. Our solidarity is not based on seeing each other as 'white' as many would believe, it is grounded in feminist understanding of shared historical trauma. What we do not need is to be further traumatized by our academic 'home'.

For now, we have at least spoken our truth to power. We call for the most privileged voices to hear, listen and understand. Some have already actively done so (E-IR 2023); the momentous joy a lot of us shared following this recognition of our work showed us that while these frictions between East and West might be difficult and painful, there is capacity to speak with and understand each other. We need more privileged voices to follow Paul Kirby's statements (Ibid). We need them to stop speaking over us. We need them to actively platform Ukrainian and fellow CEE voices. Graff (2022: 59-60) warned that feminist institutions in the West have failed not only to use their privilege to listen to Ukrainians, but also joined voices 'blaming Ukraine and NATO for the war.' Yet, many CEE scholars and activists have done so much work not only to point out issues but also offer solutions.[8] We have suggested speakers, shared petitions, organized and attended panels, workshops and called out instances of epistemic marginalization. This work is hard. It is exhausting and it uses a lot of energy we all need for confronting the interconnected imperial violence and transnational anti-feminist trends.

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[1] In this article, we build on previous FSS work that challenges FSS knowledge production including by taking inspiration for the title from Soumita Basu's article 'The global South writes 1325 (too)', *International Political Science Review* 37: 3, 2016, pp. 362–74.

[2] We wish to speak in this paper mainly to the Western FSS field, but we acknowledge that speaking over CEE and Ukraine specifically has also come from some in the Global South.

[3] This term has been introduced by CEE scholars in response to the Western tendencies to speak over Ukraine and CEE (see Smoleński and Dutkiewicz 2022; Sonevytsky 2022).

[4] We use the term 'Global East' to denote peripheralized scholarship from and about countries in-between Global North and South. It should be further noted, however, that Global East is not a homogenous epistemic entity and its equalization with Russian Studies in Western academia is highly problematic as it erases other CEE countries historically subjugated by Russian imperialism from the mental maps of the West (Khromeychuk 2022b).

[5] For further discussion on the absence of Ukraine in West's mental map and 'knowledge as security', see Khromeychuk (2022b).

[6] There are different ways of knowledge extraction from simply using direct CEE knowledge without citing it to conducting field research in CEE via Western concepts for Western academia which holds the epistemic authority.

[7] Specifically telling is the programe of the West-dominated International Studies Association (ISA) conference in Montreal 2023 which includes the word Ukraine 135 times, Ukrainian 11 times and Russia 159 times. In contrast, the 2022 Nashville ISA conference programme included Russia 128 times and Ukraine only 15 times.

[8] See the full issue of Gender Studies, Vol. 26 (1/2022): Kharkiv Center for Gender Studies on Transnational Feminist Solidarity with Ukrainian Feminists Following the On-line Meeting on May 9, 2022.