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Dr. Olga R. Chiriac

Dr. Jahara "FRANKY" Matisek

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Recommended Citation

Chiriac, Dr. Olga R. and Matisek, Dr. Jahara "FRANKY", "Russo-Ukraine War and Gendered Approaches to Strategic Competition" (2023). *Women, Peace, and Security*. 16.

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Russo-Ukraine War & Gendered Approaches to Strategic Competition

Dr. Olga R. Chiriac

Deputy Director, Center for Eastern Europe and Asian Studies
Associate Researcher, Joint Special Operations University

USAF Lt Col Jahara 'FRANKY' Matissek (PhD)

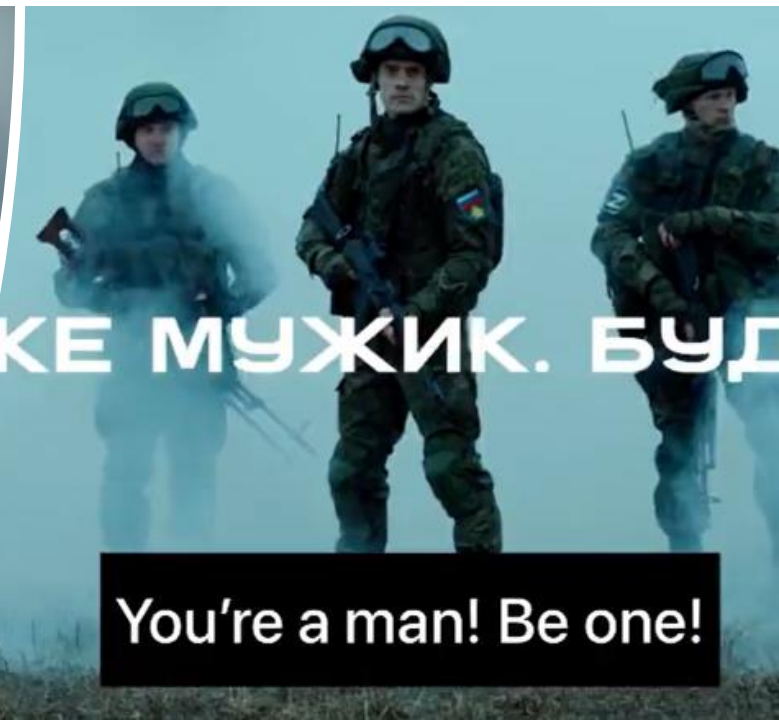
Military Professor, US Naval War College
Fellow, Irregular Warfare Initiative



ed Forces "Each of Us"



I'm a geology student



You're a man! Be one!

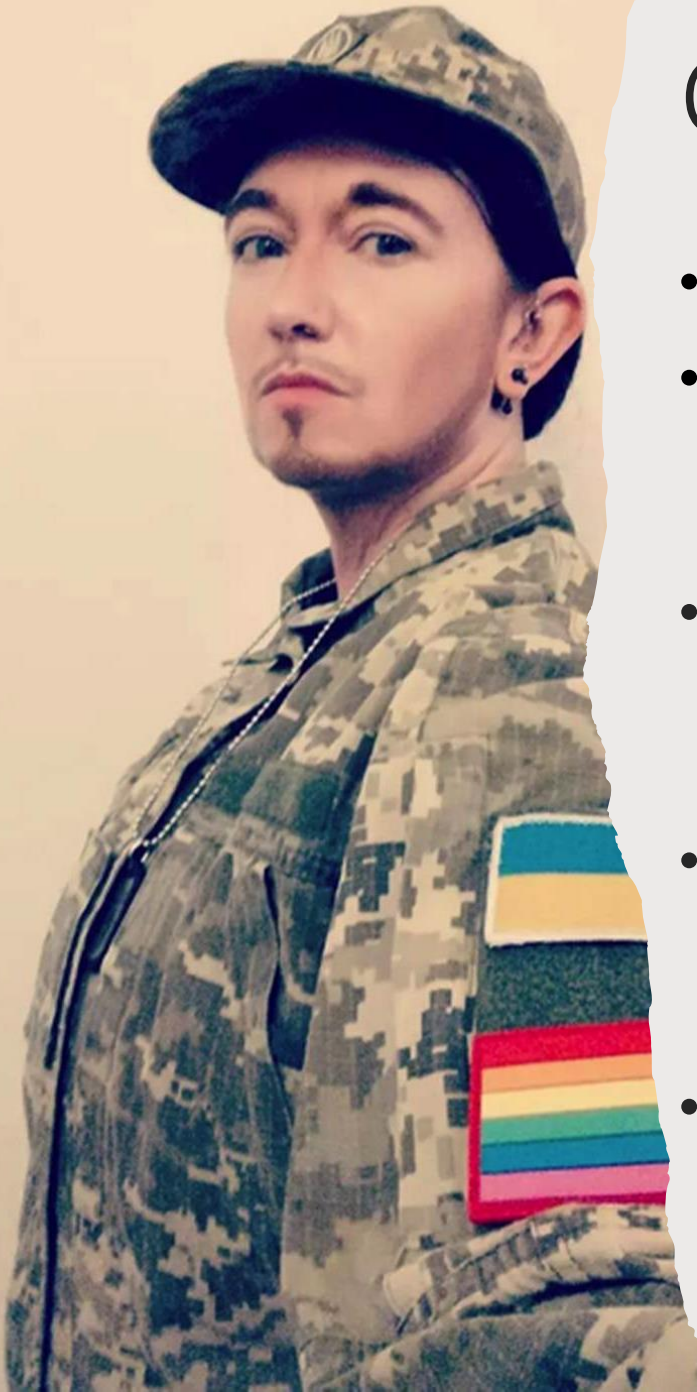
Overview

- Exploring the Russo-Ukraine conflict through Russian weaponization of gender in the global information war against the U.S., NATO, and Ukraine
- Relationship between the weaponization of gendered narratives and fostering societal resilience and networks of resistance
- Russian Toxic Masculinity
- Old versus New Battlespace problems:
 - Women, Peace, Security (WPS) interweaved in the Russo-Ukraine War
- Methodology: Fieldwork and interviews in Eastern Europe (including Ukraine) and analysis of Russian media trends



Cultural Dimension

- Ideological and/or cultural clash
- Russians defending the Eastern Orthodoxy/Christianity against the immoral West
- UKR: 60,000 women in Ukrainian military (22% of forces)
 - 5,000 serve in combat units
- RUS: 41,000 women in Russian military (4% forces)
 - “Field Wife” practice
- Russian practices today vs. USSR women in combat



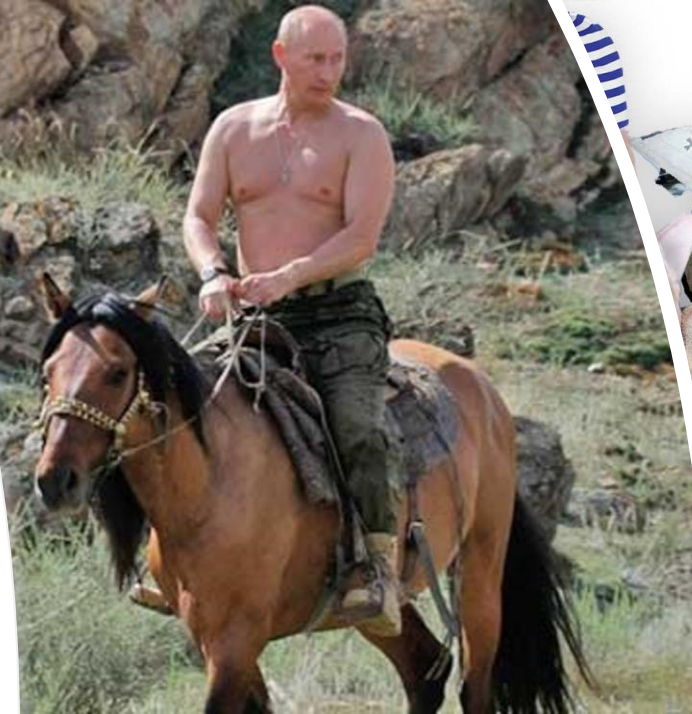


Resilience in the Digital Age

- Shift from Industrial Age resilience to Information Age resilience
- Helping Build Resilient Societies (*UN Resilience Guidance*)
 - *ability of individuals, households, communities, cities, institutions, systems and societies to prevent, resist, absorb, adapt, respond and recover positively, efficiently and effectively when faced with a wide range of risks, while maintaining an acceptable level of functioning without compromising long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and well-being*
- Ukrainian messaging of defending the homeland
- Informal Security Assistance - **PEOPLE**
 - Ukrainian civil society
 - NGOs
 - Volunteers
 - Global Civil Society (Social media)
 - NAFO

Narratives & Information Warfare

- “Narrative is both the fundamental way in which individuals understand their own personal experiences and a foundational framing of human ways of world-making.” (Goodman, 1978)
- Antifeminism: “movements classified under the umbrella term *the manosphere*, wage ideological narrative warfare to endorse a misogynistic worldview.” (Nurminen, 2019)
- “Gender and narrative are foundational to the ways in which humans engage in meaning making.” (Fivush & Grysman, 2022)
- Ukraine: Photographs and videos on social media show male soldiers cooking, women fighting, and everyone snuggling kittens and puppies



Ukrainian Refugees & Russian Violence

- Stories told about violence, trauma, and loss inform knowledge of post-conflict societies. Stories have a context which is part of the storyteller's life narrative
- Ukraine illustrates how in conflict as well as in post-conflict, **women are both subjects and agents of change**
- Bucha atrocities no different than Soviet Army occupation of Eastern Europe



Conclusion & Recommendations

- Russian leaders believe they are righteously waging an ideological/cultural war
- Narratives matter
- StratCom: Ukraine putting on a master class in “Strategic Communication” – and conveying societal and digital resilience
- WPS practices across Western governments and militaries must be institutionalized
- WPS must be integrated into future operations, be it conventional or irregular warfare

