

The Social Practice of Securitizing Women’s Rights and Gender Equality: 1325 Fifteen Years On

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Introduction

On October 31, 2000, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (SCR 1325): a groundbreaking political achievement for women’s rights and gender equality. SCR 1325 represents a critical turning point in how the international community understands the role of women, men, girls, and boys, as well as gender in matters of peace and security. The resolution officially acknowledges women’s right to participate in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding and to be included in decision-making bodies at all levels of governance. It recognizes the special protection needs of women and girls, particularly in conflict-affected countries. Such protections are not just limited to situations of sexual and gender-based violence, but also involve measures to protect the human rights of women and girls, especially as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police, and the judiciary. The resolution also mandates all UN Member States to adopt a gender perspective in all UN peace agreements and peace operations. SCR 1325 covers “the most technical of issues involved in disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating combatants and reforming the security sector, to the broadest questions of how gender equality is fundamental to human security” (Taylor 2013, 1). SCR 1325 represents a technical tool, a conceptual lens, and a binding legal framework, according to the UN Charter, to be implemented

by all UN Member States, and therefore, has the capacity to fundamentally transform gender relations and women's rights in the context of how the world defines and practices international security (Cohn 2004).

Starting with the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the WPS¹ resolutions are a product of two decades of advocacy centered on women's right to participate in peace processes and women's rights for special protection during and after conflict. These fundamental challenges regarding the exclusion of women and sexual and gender-based violence are not new issues for women or human rights activists (Bunch 1990) and have certainly been part of the global women's movement long before the 1990s (Enloe 1989). What is novel and demanding analysis, however, is the practice of framing these women's rights issues as matters of international peace and security. SCR 1325 directly applies a security framework for understanding, justifying, and addressing women's rights; this framework operates from the premise that women's rights and gender equality situated in a human rights frame or even a moral frame is not enough and simply ineffective in generating awareness, response, and commitment. Therefore, the framework highlights how protecting and promoting the rights of women is a fundamental component of establishing peace and security—the central mission of the UN, particularly the Security Council. The security language serves as a framework for action through discursive positioning that situates women as central to, or at least part of, the security agenda. Such a strategic approach highlights how women's rights and gender equality can contribute to international peace and security, and therefore constitute vested interest for many national and international leaders. As Sanam Anderlini (2000, 3) argues, it is not a matter of what women stand to gain from inclusion into the peace process, but rather “what peace processes stand to lose when women's wealth of experiences, creativity, and knowledge are excluded.”

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the effect of this security discourse on the human rights of women in conflict-affected countries. Like any strategic discourse, one must look at the power and politics behind the approach, critically examining the assumed achievements and often missed opportunities. While many have criticized the UN in its implementation of the WPS agenda for lacking political will, adequate funding, and any state-level accountability (Anderlini 2007; Binder et. al. 2008; Raven-Roberts 2005; Whitworth 2004), many scholars and activists maintain that SCR 1325 has made a difference as “an expression of a new norm in the making” (Tryggestad 2009). More specifically, it has led to rhetorical, legal, and procedural shifts that broaden the global security agenda to include women, women’s concerns, and even gender in new and important ways (Hudson 2009a, 2009b). Now, fifteen years after the adoption of SCR 1325, it is important to reassess the impact of the security framework for empowering women in conflict zones around the world.

To best understand the dynamic impact of the WPS agenda, this paper utilizes Mary K. Meyer and Elisabeth’s Prügl’s 1999 three-prong theoretical approach for understanding the particular meaning that women and gender have in the context of human rights advocacy and global governance. From contesting language to locating women and shaping national and international political agendas, the three approaches not only highlight the dynamic character of the field, but various ways that women’s networks mainstream, engage, and otherwise operate in global spaces. While SCR 1325 reaffirms some of the original insight of this scholarship, it also illustrates some significant shifts in the relationship between feminist activism and global governance structures, particularly in the area of security and human rights governance. As the findings below indicate, innovative interaction between UN senior leadership, WPS activists, and local women leaders have led to a process that is more personal, more transparent, more

democratic and in some ways more effective. At the same time, the case of SCR 1325 and the WPS agenda highlights some unique challenges that have emerged for those advocating for an approach to international peace and security that takes women's rights and gender equality in politics seriously.

This paper begins with a closer look at how the WPS agenda has challenged the prevailing discourse at the UN, especially within the Security Council. Inserting women's rights and gender equality into discussions about international peace and security not only contest language and meanings of security but also reflect critical rhetorical shifts in the work of multilateral institutions, like the UN. The paper then focuses on the particular ways the WPS agenda locates women in armed conflict, conflict resolution, and peace processes and how such recognition of women in these circumstances can lead to enhanced opportunity for more resources, new partnerships, and improved procedures for women's rights and gender equality. Lastly, the paper considers the ways in which the WPS resolutions and the advocacy surrounding their passage shapes and reshapes international and national security agendas. Such agenda-setting can have important normative, legal, and policy implications. In this way, the chapter builds on previous research (Hudson 2009a, 2009b) regarding the securitization of women's rights by incorporating Meyer and Prügl's three-prong approach and updated empirical findings as 1325 marks its fifteen-year anniversary.

Contesting Language: Changing the Way Women (and Security) are Talked about

Possibly one of the greatest achievements of SCR 1325 has been changing the discourse in global governance circles to frame gender equality and women's rights as issues relevant, if not central to, issues of international peace and security. This has meant not only recognition of women's unique security needs during and after conflict, but acceptance of the notion that

women's security is essential to the fundamental goal of the Security Council—the promotion and protection of international peace and security. To be sure, this linguistic convention relies on an instrumental argument that frames women's protection and participation as a resource to be tapped into and utilized to improve the overall outcome of the existing mission. And although this argument rests on exploitative and subordinate undertones, the majority of the local women leaders from conflict-affected areas that I have interviewed over the last decade not only identify themselves as the peacemakers (a priori) of their communities, but they want whatever argument is going to allow them to get their foot in the door. As Carol Cohn also reports, "I am told by some women 'on the ground' that they could not care less what argument gets them in—just get the damn door cracked open before we all perish" (2008, 201).

Still, despite this instrumentality, the text of SCR 1325 makes women's lives relevant to the work of the Council. The document recognizes women as both agents with rights to participate at all levels and all phases of decision-making as well as victims of armed conflict in need of special protection. The former representation of women is quite radical especially in global security governance circles. The latter is less so and, somewhat expectedly, the area where there has been the most movement over the last decade.

In 2008, the SC passed its second resolution, 1820, focused on women as victims of sexual violence and in need of special protection. This was quickly followed by two more resolutions, 1888 and 1889 in 2009. For many activists, SCR 1820 and 1888 reflected a narrowing of the WPS agenda as they focused specifically on the protection needs of women in situations of primarily sexual-based violence. This focus not only overlooks women's agency and participation rights of 1325, but it also brushes over other forms of violence that women suffer during and "after" conflict. Still, SCR 1820 did lay out some important language,

including the demand in paragraph three to “debunk[ing] myths of sexual violence” as natural by-products of masculinity, war, or even peacekeeping. In this way, the resolution does begin to chip away at the long held belief that sexual violence is a natural byproduct of war. Further, it also calls for the Secretary-General to report in twelve months with an action plan for implementation, including strategies to minimize violence, benchmarks for ensuring progress, and “timely, objective, accurate and reliable” data collection (S/RES/1820 2008, paragraph 3 and 15).

SCR 1888 also focused on sexual violence but seems to broaden its purview a bit by not only talking about victims, but “survivors” who have rights to judicial processes, to receive “redress” from their suffering and even to “socioeconomic reintegration” (S/RES/1888 2009). This rights language begins to recognize the structural inequalities that threaten women’s security during times of war and “peace.” SCR 1889 builds on this more progressive language by emphasizing the need to counter “negative societal attitudes about women’s capacity to participate equally,” making a full circle back to 1325 and its focus on women’s participation (S/RES/1889 2009, paragraph 1). What is more is that SCR 1889 also calls for:

Member States in post-conflict situations, in consultation with civil society, including women’s organizations, to specify in detail women and girls’ needs and priorities and design concrete strategies, in accordance with their legal systems, to address those needs and priorities, which cover inter alia support for greater physical security and better socio-economic conditions, through education, income generating activities, access to basic services, in particular health services, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and mental health, gender-responsive law enforcement and access to

justice, as well as enhancing capacity to engage in public decision-making at all levels;
(S/RES/1889 2009: paragraph 10)

This language, in addition to a number of accountability mechanisms also outlined in SCR 1889, moves the WPS governance agenda forward by putting structural inequality and specific rights issues on the Council's agenda while also returning to the broad goals originally set in SCR 1325 in terms of women's participation. As Dianne Otto concludes, "while the two recent resolutions still leave much to be desired from a feminist point of view, they nevertheless suggest that it is possible to strengthen the progressive content of feminist ideas, once they have a foothold in institutional discourse, even following some weakening of those footholds" (2010, 112). This building process, even if slow and nonlinear, is significant in the way ideas become institutionalized with the ongoing development of global governance structures. Nothing about these socially constructed norms and agreed-upon language is permanent or guaranteed; thus, it is critical that advocates establish accountability mechanisms, even if done in a piecemeal way. Over time, these achievements build on one another and create a web of governance structures that eventually lead to a WPS architecture.

There are now a total of seven resolutions on WPS with the two most recent being adopted in 2013. First, SCR 2106 (2013) focuses on conflict-related sexual violence and adds greater operational detail to the role of Women Protection Advisors, the Special Rapporteur on sexual violence to intervene in the field, and of all parties to armed conflict in their responsibility to prevent violence and combat impunity. Then, Resolution 2122 (2013) was adopted to request more regular briefings from relevant UN agencies, more attention to WPS issues when issuing or renewing mandates of UN missions, and committing the High Level Review of implementation of WPS in 2015. Also in 2013, the Committee overseeing the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted General Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict, which essentially “adds to the soft law on the human rights of women, and shows a willingness to expand into an area of activity where there is no clear provision in the text of the treaty, and where the Security Council has been active for the last 13 years” (Rimmer 2013, 1). More specifically, the Committee seeks to use its power to oversee state periodic reporting to achieve compliance with the WPS agenda, to encourage the allocation of adequate budgets for WPS policy-making, and to impart broad interpretations of the meaning of gender equality, particularly the meaning of conflict-related gender-based violence. These most recent documents represent an important rhetorical (re)focus on a broad gender equality agenda as well as a significant building of accountability in UN practices and procedures. As noted in previous research, this connection between the work of the CEDAW committee and WPS advocates was absent until 2006 when CEDAW’s session report began to make systematic reference to the integration of SCR 1325 in the compliance of State parties to the Convention (Hudson 2009a, 2009b).

It is important to note that these rhetorical shifts and achievements in the security discourse are not just semantics for women on the ground. One interviewee summarized the significance of the discourse:

You engage, you discuss, you argue, you advocate, whatever. Then you have a product that allows, that gives the policy weight, that raises the concerns and issues and then you have the potential to move the system...You have to start by getting the language. You get the mandate and that leads to policy – crystallizes in a document...Acceptance of the language is key. That’s where you begin to change perceptions and understandings.
(DPKO official, 2006)

The issues outlined in SCR 1325 are essential to their survival, to their security. Irrespective of the framework used, establishing the language on this is a critical first step and progress has been made on this front. In terms of overall trends, the NGO Working Group on WPS finds that the Council has increasingly incorporated language on women and gender into country-specific resolutions over the past twelve years. Over 45 percent of monitored resolutions referenced women, gender, or SCR 1325 since the resolution was passed in October 2000, in contrast to the less than 5 percent of resolutions mentioning women, girls, or gender in the period between 1998-2000.² Despite this upward trend, the gains have been inconsistent from resolution to resolution and when dealing with country-situations there is no resolution that has addressed the WPS agenda comprehensively. These gaps and inconsistencies hold true for Council reports, missions, briefings and presidential statements (Taylor et. al. 2013).

UN peacekeeping mandates have a relatively better record with eleven of the fifteen (73 percent) UN peacekeeping mandates referenced the WPS agenda. All ten of the UN political and peacebuilding mission mandates referenced the women, peace and security agenda, and four of the six (67 percent) resolutions renewing missions managed by other entities contain reference to women, peace and security (Taylor et. al. 2013). These numbers reflect a general upward trend of improvement since the passage of 1325 in 2000 (Hudson 2009a, 2009b).

This trajectory of SC resolutions and the many initiatives and activities that grew out of them represents a significant normative expansion of what constitutes a security issue in the international arena and in many ways takes advantage of the unique position countries transitioning from armed conflict have redefine what it means to be secure in a state-based system (True-Frost 2007). Nowhere is this potential more striking than in the context of security sector reform (SSR) as this is often the first order of business when trying to rebuild a society

after armed conflict. SSR provides this access early on in the process into an arena that women in most societies have been completely excluded from. Further, the security sector has significant influence in setting the parameters of what post-conflict security will be and how the rule of law will be implemented. In other words, there is the potential for a redefining of security at the national level so that gender-based violence, domestic violence, and other forms of “private” violence are taken seriously as public offenses. SCR 1325 has paved the way, for example, for gender-based violence offices to be established in national security establishments (i.e. military and police) in Rwanda, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Liberia, just to name a few. Such offices have the potential to include women in the process that ultimately determines and defines emerging policies about what constitutes violence, and in turn, what constitutes insecurity. Given women’s distinct experiences in general during conflict, their inclusion in SSR has tremendous potential to raise new questions and bring new issues to the negotiations as it seeks to define security from the individual level of analysis.³

In recognizing the significance of individual needs, even if that recognition coincides with more traditional state security needs, the international community seems to be humanizing the security agenda in significant ways. The case of SCR 1325 illustrates the lasting effect such a discursive move can potentially have in international security circles. As Carol Cohn rightly argues, “even if at this point the Security Council’s re-visioning of security is more rhetorical than practical, it still puts the UN far ahead of any academic security studies or international relations programme” (Cohn et. al. 2004, 139). In this way, the WPS agenda reflects the normative goal of human rights activism by focusing on liberal values, individual needs, and the root causes of women’s insecurities and by just looking at discursive politics we can see the

ways in which the women's activism has "worked to effect structures of global governance in which women can no longer be ignored" (Prügl and Meyer 1999, 16).

Locating Women: Creating Space and Seizing Political Opportunities

Long before women's activism in international peace and security arenas, women have "succeeded in finding or opening—if circumscribed—spaces for women inside multilateral institutions" (Prügl and Meyer 1999, 7). From suffragist campaigns to international development circles to the human rights regime, internationalist women's activism has been catalytic, innovative, and persistent (Antrobus 2004; Snyder 1995; Peters and Wolper 1995). The peace and security arena seems to be next on this advocacy trajectory and possibly most-entrenched male-dominated sphere to be challenged, as Ann Tickner's groundbreaking work first argued in 1992. This is particularly true in the context of the UN system, as SCR 1325 emerges as the next building block in what Devaki Jain has described as "a continuous sequence of UN events" expanding the meaning and scope of gender equality (2005). The existence of SCR 1325 anniversary events, in and of themselves, illustrates these phenomena well. It is worth noting that no other Security Council resolutions have such annual celebratory, stock-taking, institution-building activities like 1325 does. These international NGO-sponsored events serve to increase the connections between local, national, and international women's groups, UN agencies, and Member States through the use of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Hill et. al. 2003; Joachim 2007), and continue to be powerful opportunities to exchange information and build political support from the local to the global. As Tryggestad (2009, 540) notes, the case of SCR 1325 and the NGO activism surrounding it provides a useful illustration of the way the "third UN" has come to "routinely engage with the first and the second UN and thereby

influence UN thinking, policies, priorities, and actions” (Weiss et. al. 2009, 127). This is a unique location for the social practice of human rights to occur as it creates affective opportunities for a range of actors to interact and form relationships.

This engagement by WPS activists with gendered states and their international organizations has not of course gone unchallenged by feminist scholars and activists (Whitworth 2004; Wibben 2011). Feminists have long been critical of operating within circles of power as they too often have the ability to diffuse the radical and transformative agenda of the feminist projects in ways that often go unchallenged and even unnoticed. For many, feminist engagement with institutional power can be outright dangerous (Otto 2010). Despite this valid critique, many have found a need for both outsiders and insiders in the social practice of human rights advocacy. Georgina Waylen’s case study on gendering the global human rights regime found that “organized women ‘outsiders’ can play a key role but, on their own, cannot effect significant change” (2008, 274). In this case, insiders were effective in pressing for gender concerns by forming alliances with other sympathetic insiders. She found insiders to be necessary but not sufficient agents for change with regard to women’s rights and gender equality.

Similarly, with the adoption and subsequent implementation efforts of SCR 1325, the NGO Working Group worked closely with UN agencies, particularly UNIFEM (now part of UN Women), as well as Member States, such as Canada, Finland, the UK, and other states that constitute the Friends of 1325 coalition. These insider-outsider relationships proved central to the process of governance, not just during the anniversary events, but all year long. For example, the draftings of Presidential Statements (PRST)⁴ as well as the resolutions that have been adopted have all received edits from Member States, UNIFEM, and even under-the-radar input from the NGO Working Group on WPS. As a participant observer at many of these anniversary events, I

witnessed the collaborative but very political effort that went into the drafting and redrafting of a document that all could agree upon. From the activists' perspective the outcome is always far from ideal, but some key language is agreed upon. For example, in 2010, the PRST committed the Security Council to the development of the comprehensive set of indicators to measure the progress (and thereby evaluate the implementation) of women's rights in terms of participation, protection, and conflict-prevention. Specifically, the PRST stated in paragraph 10 that the Security Council "supports taking forward, including by relevant UN entities, the set of indicators contained in the report...for use as an initial framework to track implementation of resolution 1325." The inclusion of this language was critical. It also requested that the Secretary-General

propose in his next annual report a strategic framework to guide the UN's implementation of the resolution in the next decade, which includes targets and indicators and takes account of relevant processes within the Secretariat...to include recommendations for policy and institutional reforms in the UN that will facilitate improved response by the Organization to women, peace and security issues." (S/PRST/2010/8)

Putting the indicators in place and institutionalizing their use in annual reports is a substantial step forward in the way the SC and other relevant agencies inside and outside of the UN collect, receive, and analyze the enormous amount of information needed to understand the full range of issues for WPS governance. In short, the indicators and the Secretary-General's annual report are two tangible achievements that are assisting activists in holding Member States accountable for the implementation of the WPS agenda.

Locating women in international security initiatives has also been appreciably advanced by the Department of UN Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). “Gendering” the national and international security institutions that constitute peacekeeping operations has been a principal mechanism for implementing the goals of SCR 1325 in terms of gender equality, women’s rights, and the promotion of lasting peace and security.⁵ Recruiting more women as soldiers, police officers, and senior leaders in UN missions has been central to an overall strategy to “mainstream” a gender perspective in the UN’s work in conflict and post-conflict areas around the world.⁶ DPKO, in particular, has implemented significant organizational changes from the adoption of an internal action plan on 1325 to the establishment of a Gender Team at its UN headquarters to institutionalization of gender advisors or Gender Units in all peacekeeping missions established after 2000 (Hudson 2009, 2005; Tryggestad 2009).

With some select support from Member States, DPKO has also overseen the deployment of the first all-female police unit of peacekeepers, which were first sent to Liberia in 2007. Since then, all female-formed police units have been deployed to Haiti, East Timor, and South Sudan. The establishment of these units is important both in terms of outcome and the process involved in their creation as they seek to empower local women and further institutionalize gender-based violence as legitimate and serious threats relevant to rebuilding security sectors in post-conflict societies. The justification for these all-female contingencies often relies on essentialist notions about women’s more “peaceful nature” which makes many feminists (not UN bureaucrats) very uncomfortable. Thus, I was struck by comments from two different DPKO officials that recognized this problematic assumption and were uneasy with it as well. One official critically discussed whether or not these all-females units really challenged women’s traditional gender roles in conflict zones. The other official commented on the need to systematically research the

impact these units were having on the ground. Notably, both officials spoke of these units as just the “first step in really changing and reworking [DPKO] their agency’s approach to establishing international security for all” (Interview 2010). These “insiders” seemed conscious of the compromises they were making in the short-term while looking toward more genuine change over the long term. In many ways, promoting women’s rights through the security framework reinforces traditional—militarized—approaches to establishing peace and security, which raises serious questions about the lasting consequences for empowering and protecting women in conflict-affected countries.

Along similar lines, because of WPS advocacy, gender training is become a more standard procedure in peacekeeping missions, and trainers often introduce SCR 1325 in their in-mission training programs as a useful entry point to establishing their mandate from the Security Council to conduct such training (Lyytikäinen 2007,12). It is worth noting that many of these training programs, both the classes and the on-line training modules begin with learning the distinction between sex and gender. This simple distinction is critical to moving forward any discussion about the gendered impacts of armed conflict, peacekeeping, and “post-conflict” reconstruction. In many cases, it is the first time that those working in these areas have ever even considered the difference between the two. At minimum, these attitudinal and procedural shifts within DPKO and elsewhere illustrate a move from an ad hoc consideration, at best, to a more systematic consideration of gender perspectives and the role of women in peace missions. Much of this change has occurred under the label of gender mainstreaming, which has become the institutional gender strategy currently employed to change aspects of global governance from security to development to economics and beyond.⁷ Despite these gains, “doing” gender in the UN still defaults to locating women and focusing on improving the position of women, rather

than on the broader social and cultural structures that affect gender equality (Olonisakin et. al. 2010).

Even this more straightforward focus on the position of women is problematic. As of December 2012, women headed four of the twenty-seven (15 percent) peacekeeping, political, and peacebuilding missions, compared with six of twenty-eight (21 percent) in December 2011, and were deputy heads of four (15 percent), down from five (18 percent) in 2011 (S/2013/525, 13). In terms of peace missions in 2012, 10 percent of all police (including formed police units) were women, as in December 2011. Women's share of military posts also held constant, at 3 percent of the 79,750 individual soldiers (S/2013/525, 1). In the few places where women can be found in peace missions (Goetz 2008), such as gender offices or all female-police units significant concerns about further ghettoization and tokenism reemerge, as they have long done for those advocating for women's rights and gender equality in all issue-areas. Whitworth's study of peacekeeping and 1325, for example, highlights how gender mainstreaming in the context of these missions often serves as a problem-solving tool that is usually under-resourced and highly politicized rather than anything transformative (2004).

In this way, WPS advocacy closely resembles the additive approach of Women in Development (WID), rather than a more radical departure that may challenge the entire concept of sending soldiers to be peacekeepers, for example. Thus, despite the potentially radical language and ideas driving SCR 1325, progress is largely in terms of inserting women into the process and adding women's concerns to the agenda. This, of course, can be interpreted as the starting point for women working in a field like international security, an arena that has historically excluded women. There is certainly some validity to the argument that by adding women and women's issues and therefore broadening the security agenda, they will eventually

have transformative consequences. Focusing on women, as opposed to gender, is much “easier” because it is far less threatening to existing power structures and systems. However, in looking at places where dynamic women have been inserted particularly in the case of SCR 1325, their presence has challenged the status quo much more than most would expect. This, of course, depends on personality but the impact of individuals—even in a patriarchal system—should not be underestimated. This raises important questions about whether or not such an additive approach has a sustainable impact on women’s lives on the ground. Does this security language assist in improving women’s rights in conflict-affect areas? To shed some light on these questions, we now turn to the ways in which WPS advocacy impacts national and international agenda-setting and policy-making.

Shaping International Agendas: Mainstreaming the Normative Influence

In 1999, Meyer and Prügl’s book examined both the mainstreaming and disengaging strategies utilized by the various waves of the women’s movement during the twentieth century, differentiating between those working within institutional structures for change and those intentionally operating outside of such structures to better critique and offer alternative perspectives. While women’s rights activists in the twenty-first century certainly operate at both ends of the spectrum (and everywhere in between), the case of SCR 1325 illustrates the emancipatory potential, albeit imperfect, of engaging the mainstream while maintaining close ties with local actors operating outside of the Ivory Tower.

During one trip to UN Headquarters in 2010, I was able to observe individual briefings that UNIFEM held with several women who were local leaders in conflict-affected countries. These women came from Nepal, Sudan, and Burundi to address the Secretary-General and senior leaders from the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), UN Development Program (UNDP), UN

Women, and DPKO in what came to be the first Global Open Day.⁸ During these briefings, the UNIFEM officials were focused on preparing these women to speak to the UN senior leadership in a situation facing serious time constraints, language barriers, and inexperience speaking in such public venues like the UN. What was remarkable during these briefings was the ability of UNIFEM officials to draw out the voice of these local leaders without imposing their own agenda. In other words, UNIFEM was able to encourage confidence and time-efficiency while still allowing these women to use their own words to express what security meant in their daily lives. UNIFEM encouraged these women to use concrete examples to better connect with those that would be in the room. While one may certainly argue that the process of selecting these three women in some ways reflects the agenda of UNIFEM, from my observations there was a genuine effort by UNIFEM to bring women's concerns to the UN senior leadership in the most raw and unbiased fashion possible. For many in senior roles at the UN (who are mostly white men), this Global Open Day experience was the first time they had spoken directly with the women "on-the-ground" (who are mostly women of color) that they so often proclaim to protect and empower. This direct contact was extremely powerful, in terms of broadening the perspectives of those in positions of power and in terms of empowering women leaders by allowing their voices to be heard and to help shape the international agenda for security governance.

This sort of innovative face-to-face contact in security circles has undoubtedly contributed to a greater awareness throughout the UN system of what SCR 1325 is about, and more importantly the relevancy of women's rights and women's insecurities to the daily work of the Council. The Global Open Day did not just occur at UN Headquarters, but was part of a broader initiative in 2010. Prior to the one held in New York in October, Open Days were hosted

in nineteen of the UN's twenty-seven peacekeeping and political missions bringing together over 1500 local women leaders mostly from the Global South to meet directly with UN senior leadership at the country-level. These Open Days form the first initiative of their kind and were replicated in October at the global level where women leaders from civil society were able to share their perspectives on resolving conflict and building peace directly with the UN's most senior officials. The Global Open Day was attended by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as well as senior leaders from DPA, UN Women, UNDP, and DPKO. This type of interaction represents a significant step forward in how the UN communicates with women peacebuilders and civil society organizations as well as between agencies. These meetings represent a genuine opportunity for women activists to engage with senior-level officials (the mainstream), to influence the agenda-setting process (and the nature of process itself), and to shift the discursive frames by asking new sorts of questions and raising new issues, specifically when considering security from an individual level-of-analysis. At the Global Open Day many women leaders and UN officials expressed the desire and need for these meetings to be regularized and systematic as critical step forward in promoting and protecting sustainable peace and security for all.⁹

This link is not only resonating at the international level, but at the national and regional levels as well. To date, forty-three Member States have developed national action plans (NAPs) and regional and sub-regional clusters of countries in Asia Pacific to Europe to Africa have developed regional action plans (RAPs), frameworks, or strategies. Interestingly, NAPs and RAPs are not even mentioned in the text of 1325, but they clearly stand to play a critical role in implementation at all levels. If undertaken in an inclusive and comprehensive manner, the development process can create new spaces and entry points for a range of actors to dialogue with one another in ways they may not normally have done on WPS issues. This development

dialogue allows space for raising awareness about the WPS agenda, enhancing the understanding of the many ways SCR 1325 applies to both foreign and domestic policy, encouraging new partnerships to form that have not existed before, and empowering marginalized groups in new and effective ways. For example, it matters when women's civil society organizations or peace activist groups are sitting at the same table as military officials from the Defense Ministry, or police from the Ministry of Interior, or other senior officials from the Foreign Affairs Ministry or the Finance ministry. These engagements are critical to opening people's minds to the many ways that women's rights and gender equality are, in fact, critical considerations to national, regional, and global peace and security concerns. The potential for such action plans to shape national and regional security policies and priorities is important.

Despite the ability of WPS to effectively shape the various security agendas in some significant ways, there have been some important omissions, particularly from a feminist perspective, that will have long-term consequences for global security governance. First, SCR 1325 does not challenge the militarized approach of the UN in general and the Security Council in particular. It does not take up the issue of disarmament and relatedly, does not take seriously the pillar of conflict prevention at international, regional, or national levels. From the gender affairs officers in DPKO to security sector reform in the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), many 1325 initiatives serve to replicate and/or reinforce (Western) militarized agendas and policies. These omissions were a product of complex negotiation processes involving compromise between the NGOs working together in the NGO Working Group on WPS and political maneuvers between the NGO Working Group on WPS and UN Member States. Carol Cohn (2008) maintains that some censoring of certain feminist ideas had already taken place within the NGO Working Group on WPS. This is not surprising given the group brought together

various organizations, many of which did not identify themselves as “anti-war” or even “feminist” in the way the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) does. What is more is that the NGO Working Group on WPS was making very strategic calculations about what the Council would find acceptable and what trade-offs would have to be made. For some feminists, these trade-offs are critical first steps; for others, the compromises lead to (and even equate with) cooptation, which actually undermines the entire feminist project. This debate about the desirability of “integrating” gender policies and programs into bureaucracies is nothing new and even preceded the literature on global governance (Hale 1989; Lotherington and Flemmen 1991; Baden and Goetz 1998). What is unique to the WPS agenda is its ability to maintain a strong set of both insiders and outsiders that sometimes work together but often work separately when attempting to shape the international security agenda. The ability to frame and set the agenda is a powerful one and transition from conflict provides unique opportunity structures for women’s empowerment (Carpenter 2007).

Securitizing Women’s Human Rights: Looking Ahead

United Nations SCR 1325 and the broader WPS agenda is an instructive case for exploring an alternative discourse—and the actors and arenas that go along with that discourse—aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of women in conflict-affected countries around the world. Much of the progress and touted achievements reflects an additive and integrative approach to the international security agenda rather than more transformative and critical line of attack against the UN’s militarized narrative to establishing security, promoting peace and ensuring basic human rights. Women’s concerns and rights are not internalized or institutionalized by international security actors and the network of NGOs advocating for the WPS agenda continue to be driving force behind any achievements in contesting the language and narrow

understanding of security, in locating women and recognizing their role in conflict and conflict resolution, and in shaping international and national policy agendas to more systematically implement the WPS mandate (Shepherd 2014). The work of the Security Council in New York remains largely disconnected from the work of the UN major human rights bodies, including the CEDAW Committee. Only in 2013 with the adoption of General Recommendation No. 30 did the committee officially recognize the important overlap of CEDAW guidelines and the WPS mandate. Advocates from both the human rights networks and the WPS network would be well served to continue this critical engagement and to explore ways to further reinforce one another's efforts, particularly when it comes to reporting, monitoring and evaluating compliance with both sets of obligations.

Despite these challenges, it is clear that women's rights must continue to be inserted into international security circles, like the UN Security Council. It is another avenue for advocacy and a critical one for women's empowerment as so many countries begin to rebuild social, economic, and political structures and institutions after armed conflict. WPS advocacy efforts have successfully put women's rights and gender equality issues on the agenda of the Security Council among other international, regional and national security bodies. This discourse matters; language can influence attitudes, beliefs, and ultimately behavior.

This case also demonstrates that much more work is needed to understand the relationship between a rights-based approach and a security-based approach. This includes an in-depth look at the conceptual links between human security and human rights. As one interviewee with over twenty years of UN experience told me, "the network of those involved in initiating the women, peace, and security movement—both NGOs and UN agencies—utilized a

bandwagoning strategy by building their case upon the mainstream human rights movement” (UN official, 2006), and this link requires further analysis.

Overall, the security framework does seem to have some positive impacts for women’s rights activism. Through SCR 1325, the framework has served as an organizing and mobilizing force bringing women together, particularly for those suffering and working towards stability in war-torn regions of the world. It has allowed women to be the focus of Security Council debate for the first time in the seventy years since its inception. It has created new or improved upon existing strategic partnerships with donor countries, UN senior leadership, and the countless nongovernmental and grassroots organizations working to improve women’s lives. In some cases, it has even created opportunities for resources and funding that might not have otherwise been available.

Despite these gains, one must proceed with caution. The security language has the potential to be limiting and exclusionary. The framework tends to ignore the bigger issues of militarism and coercion that continue to guide international interaction. And it can often rely upon essentialist assumptions about gender roles that can lead to justification of a return to an oppressive status quo. Feminists continue to be wary of the security language as a new and more politicized name for the already established human rights regime. In this sense, activists must ensure that the security language builds upon the accountability mechanisms, organizational capacity, and international norms that have long been evolving for international human rights. SCR 1325 is a tool; it must be seen then as one of many means and not an end.

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¹ From this point forward, the term "WPS resolutions" will be used to represent all seven resolutions: 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2122 (2013).

² This finding has also been confirmed by the NGO, Peacewomen. For more, see http://www.peacewomen.org/security_council_monitor/handbook/introduction.

³ For more on this, see United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, *Gender and Security Sector Reform Working Group: Background Information*. http://www.un-instraw.org/en/docs/SSR/Website_Background.pdf (accessed 27 April 2007).

⁴ PRSTs are agreed upon by consensus of the Security Council members and tend to carry less weight than a resolution but more weight than a press statement. The Council can use PRSTs to draw attention to a particular urgent issue, to request action of the UN Secretariat or of the broader international community, and to recommend that key actors in a conflict or potential conflict area take certain steps. (Taylor et. al. 2013: 31)

⁵ “Peacekeeping operations” and “peace operations” refer to the whole operation comprising of civilian and military personnel.

⁶ This approach of increasing the numbers and presence of women as a “mainstreaming” approach is not without its critiques, of course. Feminists have long been problematizing this “add women and stir” approach (Whitworth 2004, Valenius 2007 and Dharmapuri 2011).

⁷ Gender mainstreaming has been official UN policy since 1997. However, SCR 1325 represents the first time that gender mainstreaming has been seen as relevant to armed conflict and the security side of UN activity.

⁸ For more on this particular, WPS campaign, see <http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/1325plus10/global-open-day/>.

⁹ For more on the Global Open Days and the outcome documents, see <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/7/open-days-on-women-and-peace-and-security>.