



The Women, Peace and Security agenda continues to have the power to transform. We must persist in our determination to create lasting change.

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Are we there yet?

Implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda: if not now, when?

Thoughts from Clare Hutchinson, the Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security

On 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The resolution illustrates the disproportionate and harmful affect that conflict has on women and girls, and stresses the need for full participation of women as active agents in peace and security.

Building on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women¹ and the Beijing Platform², Resolution 1325 was anchored to the extant frameworks addressing women's rights. It was - and remains today - a groundbreaking resolution because for the first time in the annals of the Security Council, women were central to peace and security discourse.

WPS highlights that women's exclusion from defining risk, and thus security, is a basis for women's marginalization in peace and security. For example, women are unlikely to be able to participate effectively in peace and security governance if their immediate security environment is compromised by the prevalence of sexualized violence.

Since 2000, Resolution 1325 has become the matriarch in the family of ten resolutions, collectively known as the Women, Peace and Security agenda³, each building on and strengthening the global commitment to women in peace and security. The package of resolutions provides structure for a wider scope on peace and security viewed through a gender lens.

While UNSCR 1325 did not refer to security in relation to conventional defence, it does recognize the complexity of security and in doing so broadens the scope to involve a wider range of actors to implement this agenda, including NATO.

This broadening of the agenda has led to positive results. There has been sweeping change and positive momentum. There is more investment in the agenda than ever before, a growing, authentic recognition of the myriad roles women play in peace and security, as victim and agent, and appreciation of the precariousness of women's rights, especially in relation to their sexual and reproductive health. More women are included in national forces and are involved in decision making in defence and security. There is heightened accountability through National Action Plans on WPS, gendered defence strategies and feminist foreign policies. And there is recognition that sexual violence in conflict is a major impediment to peace and security.

NATO has been part of this change. But with the expansion of the mandate, and with a broader collection of actors engaged

NATO decision-makers discussing Women, Peace and Security

On 14 October, the North Atlantic Council met in a dedicated session related to the anniversary of UNSCR 1325 to review progress that the Alliance has made in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and discuss potential areas of focus for the future, including further integrating gender into NATO's work on resilience and countering terrorism.

On 22-23 October, NATO Defence Ministers met (virtually, due to COVID-19) to discuss a range of issues. As part of these discussions, for the first time in a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, they also discussed Women, Peace and Security – what the Alliance has done to put the agenda into practice, and what more needs to be done.

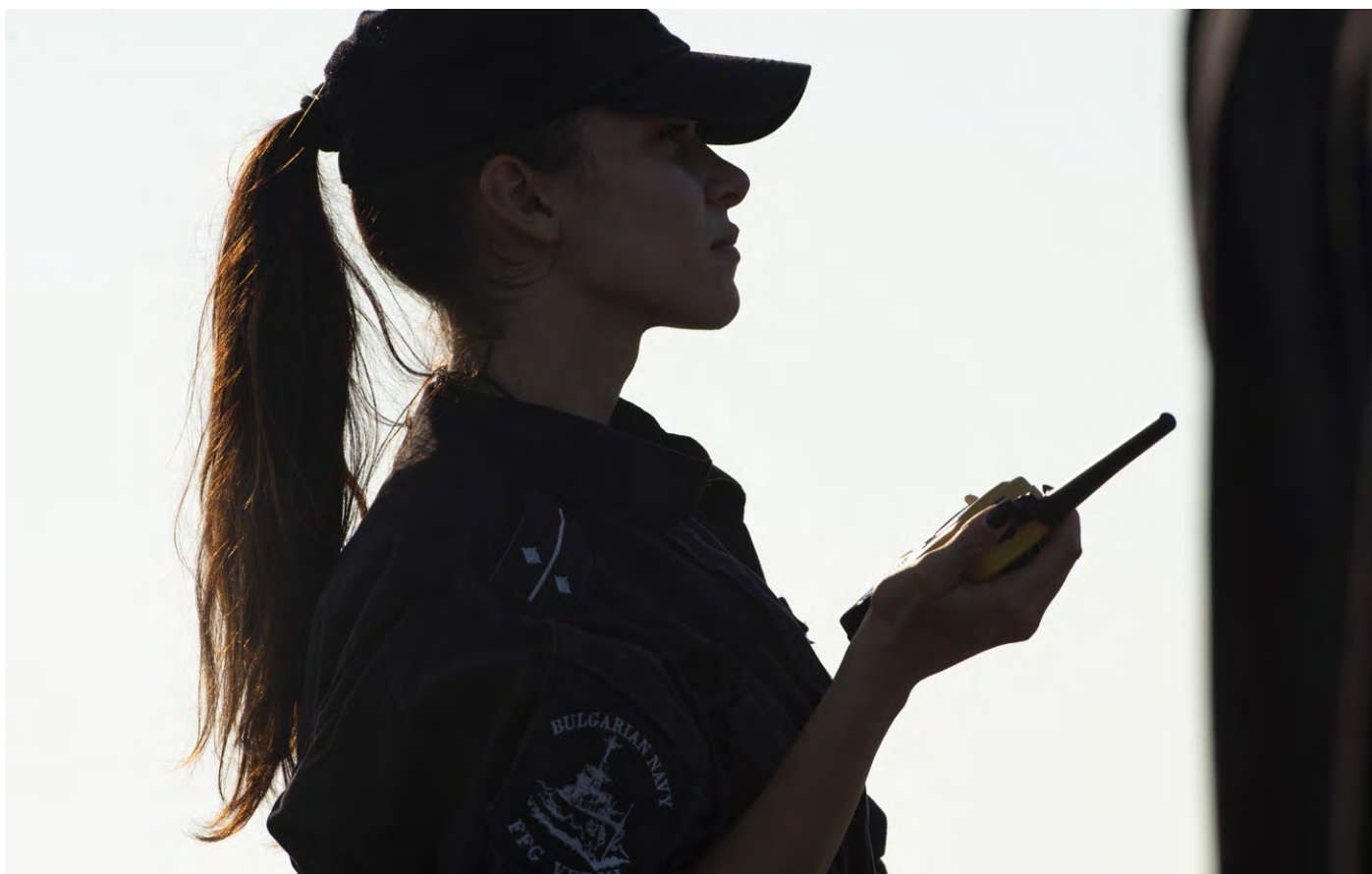
in what had been a relatively narrow community at the start, a number of dynamics have emerged that could threaten further progress. The challenge for the future of WPS will be to overcome silos, segmentation, and stasis.

When it comes to WPS, the silo challenge often manifests in the perception that the responsibility for integrating gender perspectives lies primarily or solely with a department or office with the words "woman" or "gender" in its title. The success of WPS, however, relies on the cross-cutting dynamics of the agenda, where it can transcend the concept of 'women only' to all-inclusive. The responsibility for the integration of gender perspectives and ultimately gender equality lies with everyone. Changing mindsets and upending traditional norms that marginalize women, is not the responsibility of women. Improving operational effectiveness, changing attitudes on sexual exploitation and abuse and creating conditions for dignity and respect to flourish is not

1 CEDAW(1979);

2 Beijing Platform for Action (1995);

3 UNSCRs 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019).



the purview of women. It is a collective responsibility. Cultural change across an institution requires more than the creation of a team charged with overseeing gender equality. It demands leadership commitment along with awareness of how that change relates to everyone's work and appreciation that it is critical.

The second challenge we face in implementing the WPS agenda in the years ahead is segmentation. As the mandate has expanded, there has been fracturing among 'old school and new'. A division that has emerged between WPS purists and more progressive elements advocating for a mandate that transcends the traditional. The principles of protection, prevention, and participation are interdependent. And in order to create a truly gender equal world we need to avoid the kind of segmentation that can divide us. We need to recognize and accept that the challenges to women and girls have changed, the challenges of emerging security threats have changed, and WPS has changed.

The third challenge to the WPS agenda today is stasis. The strength of UNSCR 1325 has always stemmed from its political potency and its flexibility. It is a political and operational tool that has changed the very concept of security, and it is agile enough to allow for adaptation. But if the conversation around WPS doesn't evolve with the environment and consider gendered aspects of pandemics, cyber security, disinformation, and climate change, it will lose the potency that has propelled it thus far.

NATO's future goals in WPS must sustainably integrate gender into all these areas and others that may not previously have been considered. The measure of success of all these efforts will depend on the level of integration, and the recognition that this work is imperative. The integration of gender is not an anniversary treat, it's a full time commitment. And this will require collective energy.

A more resilient global and regional architecture is needed to drive this agenda forward. Partnerships are critical to advance the awareness and the acceptance of gender equality. We cannot afford the consequences of letting WPS fade from relevance. We need a holistic approach. We need women and men, military and civilian, individual states, international organisations, civil society actors and more to take this critical work forward. And, we need to ensure that our understanding of the WPS agenda evolves as the security environment changes.

The challenges however are not unmanageable and should not distract from the level of implementation that is required. But we have to be vigilant in overcoming silos, segmentation, and stasis.

We also have to make sure that as time marches on we do not forget that UNSCR 1325 remains the blueprint for our collective work on WPS. Our work to implement the WPS agenda is not done, and the guidance the existing Resolutions provide is as applicable to new challenges as it is to those we know well. We cannot afford to stand still, but we do not need to reinvent the wheel to keep rolling. We do not need another resolution – we need to get on with the work before us.

Despite the robust progress that has been made, there is still so much more to do. The integration of the Women, Peace and Security agenda continues to have the power to transform. We must persist in our determination to implement this agenda - and in doing so create lasting change.

NATO & WPS: How an unlikely pair became inseparable



2020 is a big year for Women, Peace and Security. It is the year we celebrate two decades since the first UN Security Council Resolution on WPS recognized the important roles that women play in peace and security. A year to shed light on the many obstacles still in place to women's full and meaningful participation in security decision-making. And a year to look in earnest at the future of the agenda, including ways to accelerate transformative change.

And as we look ahead it is important to recall where this all began and how we got to where we are today. NATO has had a policy dedicated to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 since 2007, and has considered ways in which the principles of Women, Peace and Security apply to our core business for nearly two decades. The anniversary of UNSCR 1325 provides an opportunity to reflect on how NATO has changed in light of the WPS agenda and to explore how NATO will be advancing this agenda moving forward.

One Resolution that started it all

UNSCR 1325 is the first resolution on Women, Peace and Security, and was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council on 31 October 2000. That landmark resolution on WPS recognised for the first time the relationship between gender equality and international peace and security. Resolution 1325 specifically addresses how women and girls are differentially impacted by conflict and recognizes the critical role of women in the prevention of violent conflict and the building of sustainable peace. UNSCR 1325 consists of three recognizable pillars: 1) The participation of women in peace building, including enhanced efforts supporting gendered relief and recovery 2) the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, and 3) the prevention of the

violation of women's rights. Since 2000, nine additional resolutions were adopted to form what is now known as the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Each resolution strengthens the global commitment to the overlooked and undervalued roles of women in the context of conflict and peace.

A role for NATO?

NATO was not originally expected to become a stakeholder in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The agenda was born in the context of UN peace operations, and championed by women peace activists. But UNSCR 1325 changed the conversation around security and who should be involved. It should come as no surprise, then, that as the broader discussion around women in peace and security developed, NATO began to see how the WPS agenda applied to the Alliance's work.

In pursuit of participation

Well before UNSCR 1325, NATO was working on increasing numbers of women in Allies' armed forces. NATO first addressed the roles of servicewomen in the 1954 Annual Review Committee on National Military Service, and from 1961, regular conferences to address the barriers to women in armed services were held. In 1976, the Committee on Women in NATO Forces was formally established.

The WPS agenda advocates the importance of a meaningful role for women. It is not about parity alone. It is about offering equal opportunities to men and women and about working collectively towards full gender equality.



“Inclusiveness matters. None of the rights women enjoy today were just given, they were fought for and they have to be protected. It is important that women are increasingly present in NATO when discussing different security challenges.”

Radmila Šekerinska, Minister of Defence
of the Republic of North Macedonia

In that spirit, in the early 2000s, NATO expanded its efforts beyond the focus on women in the military to an attempt to improve the numbers and prospects of women working in its International Staff. NATO agreed its first Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy in 2003, a guiding document complemented today with diversity and inclusion action plans updated at regular intervals, along with policies on protections against discrimination and harassment.

NATO has a long way to go before it achieves full gender equality, but much has changed in the last twenty years. On the military side, women now make up 12% of Allied national forces – double the percentage of two decades ago. On the International Staff, women make up a larger percentage of staff than ever before – 41% - and in a more diverse set of roles. The number of women in leadership roles has increased over the years and for roles in senior management, we recently reached 30% - often seen as a tipping point for sustained, meaningful change.

Recognizing the roles of women in peace and security should not be limited to women participating in peace processes. Women have a role to play across all aspects of work on peace and security. NATO is committed to creating inclusive environments that support women’s full and meaningful participation.

The more you know...

NATO Allies and partners in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council developed the Alliance’s first policy on WPS in 2007. This first policy was a reflection of NATO’s experience with WPS in the years immediately prior – primarily in Afghanistan. Through the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force



Through their eyes – making the invisible visible

At its core, UNSCR 1325 is about making the invisible, visible: it is about opening spaces and dislodging obstacles to women’s participation in the decisions around conflict and peace.

Keeping with that important tradition, NATO hosted a photo exhibition by renowned war photographer Sebastian Rich during the second half of October.

The pictures illustrate the origins of UNSCR 1325 and why it marked such an important shift in the global conversation. They remind us that there is no peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world if women’s needs, voices and perspectives are not adequately taken into account. The silent yet screaming force of the images displays the human face of the WPS agenda – which often gets lost among lines of text in policy papers. As the security environment changes and increases in its multifaceted complexity, and as NATO adapts to respond to its call to security and stability, this is for us to remember as we move into next 20 years.

(ISAF), we were learning how important it was to apply gender perspectives to that operation. We saw that servicewomen deployed with the mission could engage with Afghan communities in ways their male counterparts could not. We also saw how we could contribute to the participation of Afghan women in their own societies, including by providing protection that would enable women to participate in the political process. This experience fed into that first policy in 2007, which was focused on WPS in an operational context, and which saw the work of implementing the WPS agenda for NATO as a task for the military.

Since then, we have come to understand that the principles of WPS apply to everything the Alliance does. That means whatever we do, if it has an impact on people, we need to consider the possible differences in impacts on men and women. This applies to crisis management – as we have seen in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo, but also to how we provide for the collective defence of NATO members, how we work with partners, how we communicate with the public, and so much more.

Today, our policy on WPS reflects this understanding. Inspired by the ideas underpinning the WPS agenda, our policy today is based on the principles of Integration, Inclusiveness, and Integrity. Integration is about how we include gender in all that we do. Inclusiveness provides for environments in which the full and meaningful participation of women can continue to grow. Integrity ensures that we are upholding the highest standards of behaviour and includes our commitments to protect women and girls from the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence and other threats to their security. In this way, NATO has made the WPS agenda its own.

From principles to the practical

The work of implementing the WPS agenda at NATO requires practical aspects to support it. Some of this comes in the form of policies. Last year, we agreed NATO's first-ever policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. A historic achievement, this new policy applies to all personnel, and defines what behaviours are unacceptable, how to prevent them, and how Allies will work collectively to ensure accountability. We are also working to update and build upon our existing guidelines on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence with a new policy. Watch this space!

Meet NATO's Gender Advisors

Deployed to all NATO commands, missions and operations, NATO Gender Advisors are key for the successful implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Who are these women and men? What does their daily work look like? And why are they so important to NATO?

Watch this video to learn more: [ENG](#) | [FRE](#)

Policies are important – and it's always people that carry forward their implementation. NATO's Gender Advisors are essential players in this regard. Part of a large network made up of military and civilian personnel that work across the NATO command structure, the Gender Advisors' responsibility is to deliver advice on the gendered dimensions to all that we do. NATO has proudly deployed Gender Advisors since 2009, and is constantly looking for ways to strengthen the effectiveness of this role.

Accountability is key

This month we established the Leadership Task Force on WPS, chaired by the Deputy Secretary General. The Task Force includes senior managers from the International Staff, International Military Staff, and NATO agencies and provides a forum to address key challenges to implementing the WPS agenda and to explore opportunities for further progress.

It goes without saying that the integration of gender perspectives should not rest on the shoulders of the Gender Advisors alone. To successfully and sustainably integrate gender into all that NATO does requires that people across the organization are involved and understand how this applies to their area of responsibility. This is why we have developed networks of Gender Focal Points. Gender Focal Points are staff members working all across NATO's civilian and military structures that help to ensure gender perspectives are integrated in every policy, programme, and activity that NATO carries out. There are Gender Focal Points working in public diplomacy, operations, intelligence, and defence investment. They work in NATO's Standardization Office and the NATO Communications and Information Agency as well. There really is a gender component to everything we do, and our Gender Focal Points are helping everyone see that. All of this is underpinned by support from leadership across the civilian and military structures.

In a perfect world, everyone would understand why accommodating the different security needs of men and women makes NATO so much more effective and how to do that well. But until the world is perfect, we're committed to providing our teams with the support they need to ensure we're integrating gender perspectives into all our work.

Happy anniversary!

The 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 is a great moment to reflect on and discuss what NATO has done, how it could do better, and how to advance this agenda going forward. We are very aware that the security environment within which we are operating is undergoing rapid and unprecedented change.



“Resolution 1325 has had a profound impact worldwide. The principles of Women, Peace and Security have an important contribution to make to NATO’s adaptation to a complex and challenging security landscape.”

Jens Stoltenberg,
NATO Secretary General

Think of climate change, cyber defence, even pandemics – the world is changing and we need to ensure we change with it. That means our work to implement the WPS agenda will continue to evolve as well.

We are always on the lookout for great ideas that will help us adapt and be the best security providers we can be. Our new essay series compiles diverse and interesting perspectives on how NATO is to take WPS forward. We also just wrapped up a first conversation with experts on how NATO and WPS are to prepare to respond today to the security challenges of tomorrow.

NATO may not have been front and centre of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in 2000, but we have taken up the mantle and are committed to the advancement of gender equality in the global security architecture. NATO and WPS go hand in hand, and we look forward to building on the successes of the last two decades and to strengthening the role of women in peace and security in the years to come.

Digital Dialogue on the Future of Women, Peace and Security at NATO

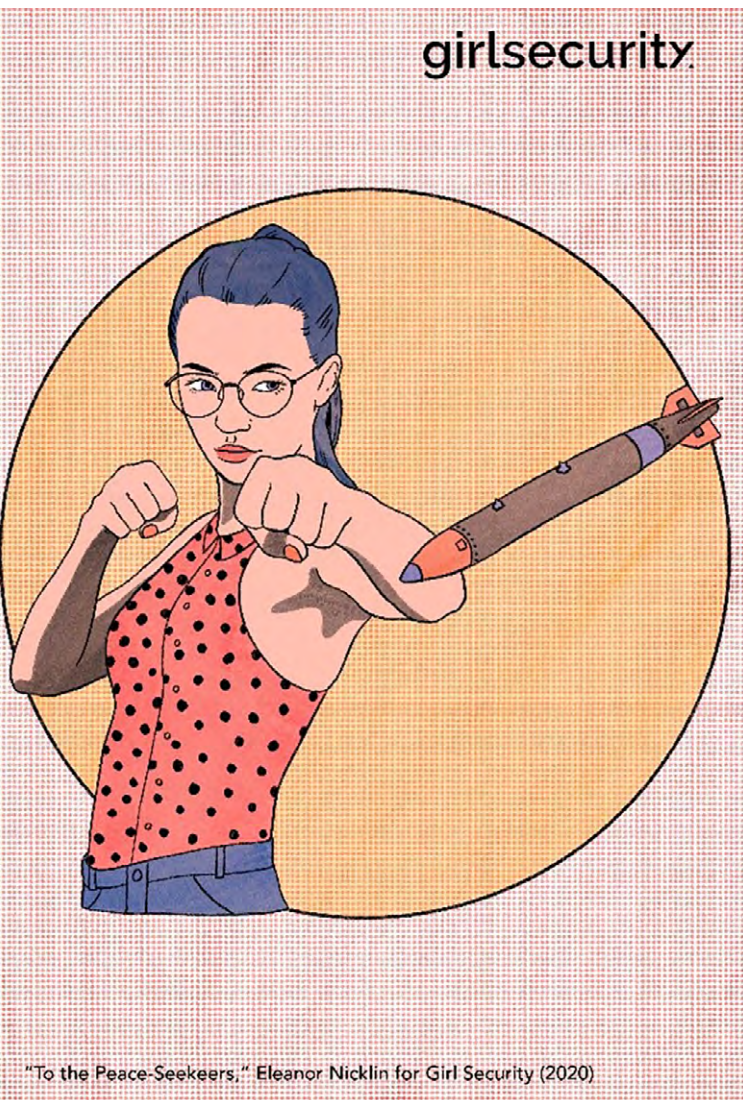
The 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 is an opportunity to take an honest look at the future of the WPS agenda, reflecting on ways to ensure the mandate remains fit for purpose and can continue to accelerate transformative change. NATO is and wants to be part of that conversation, in particular as it recently launched the #NATO2030 process to ensure the Alliance remains ready for the challenges of tomorrow. This is why, on 15 October 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed Radmila Šekerinska, Melanne Verveer, Robert Egnell, and Kristina Lunz to help us think about how the WPS agenda should evolve and adapt to new security challenges related to climate change, cyber defense, even pandemics. The discussion explored how NATO’s approach to WPS should adapt to such change, and identified opportunities to strengthen NATO’s role in WPS going forward. Our key take-away? Never stop learning, never stop growing.

To watch the conversation on line, please click [here](#).



Inclusion and Participation are Not Enough: Reshaping Institutions Through WPS

By Lauren Bean Buitta and Erin Connolly*



"To the Peace-Seekers," Eleanor Nicklin for Girl Security (2020)

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Not nearly at its midpoint, 2020 has already been a year of significant disruption. Amid a global pandemic, recession, and anti-racism protests, the security ideals upon which nations have been built are in flux. Nations are faced with systems that no longer serve their interests or have never served broader community interests. The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda provides an opportunity to recalibrate institutions that are failing to conform and whose inception was informed by the security ideals of a homogenous group. The Alliance must reshape its institutional ideals to reflect what the world is finally realizing: women's inclusion and participation are not enough. Systemic innovation is required.

About Girl Security

The mission of Girl Security is to close the gender gap in national security through learning, training, and mentoring support for girls. Building future generations of women national security leaders begins with empowering girls in national security. Like STEM, national security offers many pathways, and the Girl Security SEA Model is a mindful approach to an important mission. Girl Security believes that empowering girls in national security will be the most transformative advancement of the 21st century. Girl Security seeks to build a world where women are the decision makers responsible for the security our nations and the world.

Learn more [here!](#)

Women have emerged as the apparent dark horse of the pandemic response race. Women's political leadership⁴ amid this global crisis is celebrated and studied, only affirming what WPS advocates have long argued: women's security contributions are not valued, until they can no longer be ignored. While women's leadership should be recognised and celebrated for its efficacy amid one of the most pressing security challenges of recent history, women's security expertise remains systematically under-utilized and undervalued. While WPS has made significant progress⁵ over the past two decades, it is not a static set of resolutions.

In the next decade, WPS can be more than an agenda; it can become the architecture for new security and defence norms, strategies, and institutions that are needed to confront more diffusive, and sometimes unanticipated, global security threats. Just as male notions of protecting "bodies, borders, and boundaries"⁶ have defined the last century of security institutions, so too can women's security notions define a new path forward for the next 100 years.

Importantly, in many countries, the rights of girls and women may not exist or are concealed or oppressed. In the United States, for example, systems designed to protect women and girls have too often failed to do so; this includes the judicial and

* This essay was written in spring 2020

4 <https://www.nbcnews.com/know-your-value/feature/covid-19-era-female-leaders-are-shining-here-s-why-ncna1227931>

5 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>

6 Bennett, G.M. (2009). National Security Mom. Wyatt-MacKenzie Publishing.



political systems. Therefore, girls and women often work outside of systems and institutions to establish security for themselves, and perhaps their families and communities. Thus, they do not adhere to stringent notions of security imbued in so many institutions and societies. Girls and women adapt; they innovate.

“Efforts to reframe security must not be designed to merely include girls and women as participants in the current system, but to activate girls and women to redefine the system themselves.”

This adaptation is in part a response to widespread systemic failure to recognise the needs of women and girls. In the United States, COVID-19⁷ has disproportionately impacted women and marginalized communities⁸, exacerbating existing racial, gender, and income inequalities. Women have been most vulnerable⁹ in the capacities in which they are a majority – at home and in healthcare. Yet, efforts to encourage girls’ participation in male-dominated industries are falling short. Girls’ confidence in pursuing STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) careers declines by 20% after high school. However, the career “leaky pipeline” is often blamed for the lack of women in positions of leadership. These issues are connected and demonstrate how trying to “include” women in a system designed by – and for – men does not create the required change for all, or even some. The recent State Department 2020 WPS

Action Plan also acknowledges¹⁰ that, “As more women claim opportunities for their full participation in political processes, including in leadership roles, they have encountered increasing levels of harassment, intimidation, and abuse.” In short, the current systems aren’t working.

To create a new path forward, security and defence institutions must develop an understanding of how women and girls experience security and what skills women and girls harness to secure themselves, their families, and communities. These insights can inform policies and strategies that redefine institutions, serve as roadmaps for new security ideals around defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, and inform education and training programs for girls and women in security.

As NATO reflects on a way forward, girls and women continue to remain vulnerable to varied threats to their physical security in addition to disproportionate¹¹ exposure to gendered digital threats. If NATO chooses to innovate and imbue its ideals, strategies, and institutions with WPS priorities, laying the groundwork must begin today. Strategic partnerships with other nations, industry, and civil society as well as funding must be mobilized to bring security education and training to girls and women at the community-level. While 83 countries emphasized their WPS commitments through National Action Plans, less than 25%¹² received actual funding for implementing them as of 2020. Meanwhile, countries who claim to financially support and prioritize WPS initiatives often fail to provide the requisite funding. The initial US \$4 million¹³ to advance the inclusion of women at the Department of Defense (DOD) in fiscal year 2019 is not even a full one percent of the total¹⁴ \$1.3 trillion DOD budget.

7 <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/06/24/882109538/where-the-women-arent-on-coronavirus-task-forces?fbclid=IwAR2H2T40Aw-OZV30HP6uLBPZMDXgy3Y7BjeKxlg6zRd2xVBaoYSZaRgUI&t=1600434714704>
 8 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25815&LangID=E>
 9 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_175694.htm
 10 https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20-01943-SGWI_v11_forWeb_Bookmarks508.pdf
 11 <https://inkstickmedia.com/battling-a-new-era-of-disempowerment/>
 12 https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2020/04/28/women_peace_and_security_at_twenty_115231.html
 13 <https://oursecurefuture.org/blog/make-2019-women-peace-security>
 14 <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2019/5/13/how-the-pentagon-can-build-on-natos-success-with-women-peace-amp-security>

“Girls and women often work outside of systems and institutions to establish security for themselves, and perhaps their families and communities. Thus, they do not adhere to stringent notions of security imbued in so many institutions and societies. Girls and women adapt; they innovate.”

While goals, implementation strategies, and funding are critical, sustainability is also required. If not for sustainability, NATO and other institutions will continue to confront an identity crisis. There are two key sustainability vectors. The first is vertical – or multigenerational – sustainability. In order to remain reflexive, sustainable institutions require multi-generational engagement. This requires adults working closely with youth through sustained engagement, advocacy, and mentoring. For girls, where a lack of mentorship is an impediment to advancement, this is especially crucial. This is particularly pertinent today in a rapidly changing security environment shaped by technology. The NATO Young Professionals Program¹⁵ offers positive steps towards meaningfully including young voices, but more is required.

The second sustainability vector is horizontal among women around the world working on behalf of WPS. A new path forward creates tremendous opportunities to mitigate systemic discrimination, but technological innovation also poses significant challenges¹⁶ to women’s advancement. How will those with greater access to technological innovation and advancement fair in contrast to those with limited or no access? And how might technology disrupt any existing WPS equilibrium that exists among women from different nations? How might technology shape differing security norms among women and how will differing norms challenge the existing WPS agenda? Predictive analysis and discourse among WPS advocates and institutions is required to anticipate potential fractures in the advancement of the WPS agenda.

A global disruption has revealed the fragility of security ideals and institutions amid a changing, globalized environment. Innovative approaches that build bridges and reflect the complex interdisciplinary nature of the 21st century security environment are required. The lived security experience of girls and women and their inherent innovative aptitudes offer a needed perspective that must be catalysed through engagement, education, and advancement; fostered through government programming, partnerships, and funding; and advanced through policy, strategies, and institutions. Efforts to reframe security must not be designed to merely include girls and women as participants in the current system, but to activate girls and women to redefine the system themselves.

WPS Reading Tip: Women, Peace and Transforming Security

Do you like this piece by Lauren Bean Buitta and Erin Connolly? Then be sure to check out the Human Security Unit’s latest essay series: Women, Peace and Transforming Security. This collection explores important and diverse contributions from members of the Civil Society Advisory Panel, academia, private and public sector representatives, and lots more.

Click here to learn more: [ENG](#) | [FRE](#)

¹⁵ <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/175210.htm>

¹⁶ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joanmichelson/2019/06/30/is-ai-really-biased-against-women/#719b6d942119>

Views from the field

Interview with Major-General Jennie Carignan, Commander NATO Mission Iraq, and Major-General Michele Risi, Commander NATO's Mission in Kosovo.



NATO operations and missions are important avenues for the implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in NATO, and gender analyses ensure they take account of the different perspectives of women and men. This is why we asked Major-General Jennie Carignan, Commander of NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) since December 2019, and Major-General Michele Risi, Commander of NATO's Mission in Kosovo (KFOR) since November 2019, about their views on the role of Women, Peace and Security in theatre. Thank you, Generals, for all the important work that you do in support of Women, Peace and Security at NATO.

How important is the WPS mandate to the successful implementation of your mission?

COMNMI: Extremely important. Our mission in Iraq is to advise the Ministry of Defence in building a military force that is more efficient, trusted by the Iraqi people, and has strong leadership, with secure ties to international allies and partners. We are to assist in the development of a force for good, to have a stabilizing effect for Iraq. However, to be a force for good, Iraqis have to see themselves in their own military forces. In that sense, it is crucial that women and the wealth of Iraq's diverse population be given the opportunity to serve as active and valued contributors in its defense. The proof is there. When we look around the world, nations are stable and prosper when women are equal partners in their military, government, and communities. We have to remember that women constitute 50% of Iraq's population. Stability and prosperity are not possible to build when half of your population is absent from decision making and conflict resolution processes. Young women under the age of 24 comprise one quarter of the population of Iraq. This represents a significant untapped resource for the Iraqi security forces.

The Ministry of Defence can take the lead and champion the Women, Peace and Security agenda through its security

“Continuous cultural change driven by the senior civilian and military leadership of NATO is the key to success.”

sector reforms, thereby increasing the integrity of the force and Iraqi population's confidence in its armed forces. Successful incorporation of the WPS agenda means that all members of the Iraqi security services, both men and women, will be better educated and equipped to deny enemy attempts to exploit gender and, thus, prevent vulnerable populations from further harm.

COM KFOR: UNSCR 1325 is very important to the successful implementation of KFOR's mandate. I see a gender perspective as a force multiplier and a tool to better achieve our mandate. The implementation of the Women, Peace and Security mandate must be in line with the overall mission's mandate. For us at KFOR this is UNSCR 1244. Based on this, KFOR is to contribute to a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement for all citizens in Kosovo. Therefore, in line with this mandate, it is crucial for me to take into account the different security needs of men, women, boys, and girls. Other organizations in Kosovo also implement UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions in their mandates, among them UNMIK, EULEX, and the OSCE. KFOR makes a concerted effort to liaise closely with them to ensure that the aim of UNSCR 1325 is achieved. The approach KFOR has now undertaken is completely inclusive. All parties are considered in the equation, the young, the old, men, women, boys, and girls, regardless of their ethnic and religious backgrounds.

KFOR supports the continuation of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue and I believe that all members of the society should be represented in the process. KFOR is convinced that lasting peace in Kosovo will only be achieved by fully engaging all members of



Kosovo society in the peace process. As women and minorities are often not represented, even proportionally, in formal or official positions, KFOR recognizes the importance of both female participation and ethnic minorities at the highest level in government.

I want to stress that the WPS mandate should not be seen as an add-on or a stand-alone topic, but it needs to be integrated into the staff procedures and assessments of all branches, as a tool to better achieve our mandate.



When did you first become aware of the importance of integrating gender into military operations? What was the moment of realization for you that there was a practical reason for considering gender in relation to operational tasks?

COM NMI: To be blunt, a few years ago, I did not see the need to integrate gender in military operations. But starting in 2012, I was invited to speak at various forums to allies on the integration of women in the combat arms. Not being an expert on gender and WPS, I had to spend a significant amount of time to reflect on my own Canadian experience and learn about the gender perspectives. That allowed me to not only explore a whole new range of opportunities and solutions when looking through the lens of gender, but also to better understand “ourselves” and “others”.

Conflict resolution is a multi-dimensional, complex affair and hence requires a multi-disciplinary approach with the contribution of a diverse team. In my experience, a diverse team is more tolerant, more empathic, more curious and, consequently, more creative. It is important to realize that when 50% of the population is ignored during military operations and peace processes, you cannot have full stability or a fully implemented peace. The women ISIS fighters are a good example of this. The Al-Hol refugee camp in northeastern Syria, also nicknamed “ISIS Academy” is home to 20,000 women and 50,000 children who are at risk of being radicalized to ISIS doctrine. The camp’s long-term impacts on security are potentially devastating and do not bode well for the future stability of both Iraq and Syria if this situation is left unattended.

“To be a force for good, Iraqis have to see themselves in their own military forces. In that sense, it is crucial that women and the wealth of Iraq’s diverse population be given the opportunity to serve as active and valued contributors in its defense.”

COM KFOR: I have followed the development of the inclusion of gender perspective in military operations throughout my career. Here in Kosovo I found a developed structure that highlighted the operational impact a gender perspective can have for the NATO-led mission.

The practical reason for considering a gender perspective in relation to operational tasks is clear: in peace support operations the centre of gravity usually lies with the population. Therefore, it is mission essential to properly include all of the population and not exclude women, which constitute more than one half of it, to understand their security needs in terms healthcare, education, and rule of law, and to encourage their involvement in political and social life as it has a positive impact on security operations.

You will often find women working across ethnic and religious divides. They set a clear example of how an inclusive approach leads to better solutions and improves the chance of interethnic cooperation and prosperity for all.

As we mark the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, we see that there has been much progress over the last two decades. But we know there’s more work to do. What is your advice on the future of WPS in relation to NATO operations?

COM NMI: I would start with ourselves. Internal to NATO we need to continue our relentless efforts in the progress of, and actual actions on, WPS. We can only have success with this agenda during operations if we lead by example. As is true for any change agenda, continuous cultural change driven by the senior civilian and military leadership of NATO is the key to success. The influence of a good model cannot be underestimated, as it speaks louder than words. Even so, with respect to our efforts in the NATO Mission Iraq, assisting the Iraq MoD in its implementation of UNSCR 1325 remains a challenging task. Iraq ranks 131 of 162 on the Gender Inequality Index. Change is always an uphill battle, and particularly so in the shadow of conflict as well as within the context of the current triad of economic, political, and health crises in Iraq. However, these challenges should not deter gradual change towards gender equality. The Iraqi Armed Forces will need diverse decision making even more during times of crisis and change, in order to produce the best operational outcomes in the field. The Iraqi government has already accepted this challenge in being the first Arab country to adopt UNSCR 1325 in 2014 and publish its first National Action Plan in 2014. I look forward to the implementation and publication of the new National Action Plan currently awaiting ratification.

COM KFOR: I think that supportive leadership is essential to the success of the implementation of WPS in NATO’s missions. It is important to me that my Gender Advisors are supported



by commanders at HQs and at Regional Command levels. A gender perspective must be implemented starting from the Commander all the way down through the chain of command. I took over command as COM KFOR in November 2019. Over the past 11 months of my command I have worked together with the GENAD Office to integrate a gender perspective into our operations. KFOR, however, has been working to integrate a gender perspective into KFOR operations since November 2010 – when the position of the GENAD Office was established. So my advice is not just on what I have seen over the last 11 months, but based on lessons learned at KFOR over the past 10 years. I am delighted to have a fully staffed GENAD Office, as this role cannot be a single appointment or dual-hatted appointment. The GENAD Office is too important for KFOR’s operational effectiveness.

“Lasting peace in Kosovo will only be achieved by fully engaging all members of Kosovo society in the peace process.”

Another very important point is education about the role of the Gender Advisor. It needs to be clearly defined; the Gender Advisor is an operational appointment providing advice on integrating gender perspectives; it is important that this not be confused with the responsibility for human resources functions like equal opportunity or sexual harassment. This misperception really derogates the effectiveness of the Gender Advisor and makes the task much more inefficient. My Gender Advisors ensure that KFOR’s soldiers, particularly our Liaison Monitoring Teams, are trained in how to do their work with a gender perspective and how to reach out to all social groups in their areas of operations in order to increase our information gathering and information dissemination. The Liaison Monitoring Teams are not just my eyes and ears, but also my mouth and I want to make sure they engage with everyone in their communities, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable in society – ethnic minorities, the elderly, women and children – that are often overlooked. This gives me a more complete picture of the security situation.

Third, gender is about everyone in society. So men must be involved in the process as this gives great credibility and aids in implementation. We must get rid of the perception that gender is a women’s issue. We had some male Gender Advisors here at KFOR in the past. For some it was a strange concept to see a male Gender Advisor, but my advice in relation to NATO operations is to have a GENAD Office consisting of men and women just like it is in any other office. KFOR addressed this concern by appointing two male Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in KFOR HQs.

Did you know?

That KFOR carries out many assistance projects, each of which includes a gender perspective? For example, KFOR has recently deployed its first all-female Liaison Monitoring Team which donated materials to the domestic violence shelter in Urosevac/Ferizaj. This shelter has seen a surge in domestic violence cases due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making KFOR’s support particularly important. Additionally, KFOR has recently provided support to ‘Jeta’ - an NGO that works to protect female victims of gender-based violence. Donations of sewing machines and other tailoring equipment enables professional training for victims, and provides them with a sense of independence. Many other projects KFOR has supported focus on ethnic minorities who, during the pandemic, face significant financial challenges.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the content of this edition of the WPS bulletin, please contact the Women, Peace and Security team (part of the Human Security Unit) at:

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