

# NATO's Implementation of UN SCR 1325

Written by Katharine Wright

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## NATO's Implementation of UN SCR 1325

<https://www.e-ir.info/2012/09/22/natos-implementation-of-un-scr-1325-supporting-a-militarist-agenda/>

KATHARINE WRIGHT, SEP 22 2012

NATO's adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 has drawn attention to the limitations embodied in the Resolution as a transformative feminist tool. This article examines NATO's adoption of UN SCR 1325 and in particular the disjuncture between NATO advocating increasing women in the military under UN SCR 1325 and feminist intentions for the Resolution.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000) was ground-breaking because it acknowledged, for the first time, the unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. UN SCR 1325 was expected to challenge gender power hierarchies because it called for the participation of women at all levels of decision-making on peace and security; gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes; and the protection of women from violence during and post-conflict. As a result of this, and because of the crucial part feminists played as part of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security which lobbied for and drafted the Resolution, UN SCR 1325 was championed as a 'feminist achievement'.<sup>[1]</sup>

However, significant compromises had to be made to the aspirations of the NGO Working Group which served to limit the transformative potential of the Resolution. Crucially, UN SCR 1325 does not challenge the militarism of the Security Council, nor does it call for disarmament, which were two key feminist aspirations of the NGO Working Group<sup>[2]</sup> and, as such, the transformative potential of the Resolution was limited from the outset.

In September 2009, NATO approved Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1, which committed NATO to integrating 'UN SCR 1325 and gender perspectives in the NATO command structures', and applies 'to all NATO establishments deploying personnel in support' of NATO-approved missions.<sup>[3]</sup> This built on NATO's initial adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325,<sup>[4]</sup> which was submitted jointly with the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and advocated increasing the participation of women in the military.<sup>[5]</sup> In doing so, NATO went beyond UN SCR 1325, because the Resolution does not explicitly call for the increased participation of women in the military.

To understand why NATO has sought to increase the number of women in the military under 1325, it is necessary to understand NATO as 'a teaching machine'<sup>[6]</sup> facilitating the dissemination of lessons among member-states. This approach situates NATO's reinterpretation of UNSCR 1325 within lesson-sharing at NATO over state-level trends impacting upon recruitment levels into the military. The first state-level trend which poses a threat to NATO member-states' recruitment levels is the phasing out of conscription across Europe, which corresponds with a reduction in recruitment into the armed forces. As a result, voluntary recruitment systems increase the role of women at a greater pace than those with conscription,<sup>[7]</sup> and NATO has simply endorsed this trend.

The second state-level trend is the declining birth rates across Europe, which has the potential to impact upon NATO member-states' ability to maintain sufficient troop numbers. This is not the first time NATO member-states have reacted to a demographic trend. Following declining birth rates between 1975 and 1995, NATO member-states increased the number of women in their militaries.<sup>[8]</sup> It is clear that the crucial variable determining the incorporation of women into the military is whether there are enough men to fulfil the need of the military's mission.

Both the NATO/EAPC action plan and NATO's Bi-Strategic Directive on UN SCR 1325 are silent on how to incorporate gender mainstreaming in relation to increasing women in the military. As Sjoberg argues, women joining

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the military do not join organisations which become gender-neutral just because of their presence.[9] These organisations have sometimes hundreds of years of history dominated by masculine values.

If an increase in women in the military was accompanied by a programme of gender mainstreaming, there could be transformative consequences. Gender mainstreaming in the military would frame women as agents, not just victims, by challenging the 'just warrior' and 'beautiful soul' narrative and even bring into question the desirability of war as a policy option. The selective approach to gender mainstreaming outlined in NATO's action plans on UN SCR 1325 indicate the weakness of pursuing a transformative feminist agenda through the UN Security Council.

NATO's reinterpretation of UN SCR 1325 has had wider ramifications for international politics. A review of the 37 states that have National Action Plans (NAPs) on UN SCR 1325 indicates that NATO has influenced 7 to adopt UN SCR 1325 or in their interpretation of the Resolution to include increasing women in the military as a goal. Austria and Denmark both refer to the NATO/EAPC action plan in their own NAP. Bosnia-Herzegovina (non-NATO member contributing to ISAF and EAPC member), Estonia (NATO member), the UK (NATO member) and Italy (NATO member) explicitly outline integrating women into the military as a specific focus area of their NAP on UNSCR 1325. Norway's (NATO member) second NAP, adopted in 2011, includes a focus on strengthening women's participation in international operations.[10] This legitimates NATO's claim that increasing women in the military is an important component of the women, peace and security agenda (even when not accompanied by a programme of gender mainstreaming) and indicates that NATO has been successful in reframing UN SCR 1325 to support increasing women in the military.

In conclusion, this article has outlined how understanding UN SCR 1325 as requiring an increase in women in the military has served as a useful tool to counter expected 'manpower' shortages across Europe. Advocating increasing women in the military was far from the intention of the feminists who lobbied for and drafted UN SCR 1325 and speaks to the issue of unintended consequences of pursuing a feminist agenda through an institution embodying hegemonic masculinity.

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[1] Cockburn, C., (2011) 'Snagged on the Contradiction: NATO, UNSC Resolution 1325, and Feminist Responses', <http://www.cynthiacockburn.org/BlogNATO1325.pdf> [accessed 12/6/2012]

[2] Cohn, C., Kinsella, H and Gibbings, S., (2004) 'Women, Peace and Security Resolution 1325', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol.6 (1) 130-140

[3] NATO., (2009) 'Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1', available at [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2009\\_09/20090924\\_bi-sc\\_directive\\_40-1.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2009_09/20090924_bi-sc_directive_40-1.pdf)

[4] United Nations, (2000) S/RES/1325 2000, 31st October 2000, available at [http://www.un.org/events/res\\_1325e.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf)

[5] NATO/EAPC., (2007) 'Implementing UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security', *EAPC(C)D(2007)0022*

[6] Enloe, C H., (1983) *When Khaki Becomes You*, London: Pluto Press, 131

[7] Segal, M W., (1995) 'Women's Military Roles Cross-Nationally: Past, Present and Future', *Gender and Society*, Vol.9(6) 765-766

[8] Ibid

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[9] Sjoberg, L., (2010) 'Women fighters and the 'beautiful soul' narrative', *International Review of the Red Cross*, No.877, 53-68

[10] Peacewomen., (2012) 'National Action Plans' <http://www.peacewomen.org/naps/#>

[11] Cockburn, C., (2011) 'Snagged on the Contradiction: NATO, UNSC Resolution 1325, and Feminist Responses', <http://www.cynthiacockburn.org/BlogNATO1325.pdf>

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### **About the author:**

Dr Katharine A. M. Wright is a Senior Lecturer in International Politics at Newcastle University and Chair of the International Studies Association (ISA) Committee on the Status of Women. Her research centres broadly around gender and security in institutional settings including NATO and the EU. She is co-author of *NATO, Gender and the Military: Women Organising from Within*. She has also published (with Dr Toni Hastrup and Professor Roberta Guerrina) on the gendered and racialised impact of Covid-19 on Politics and International Relations in *Gender, Work and Organisation* [Open Access]. She tweets @KAMWright.