

UNSCR 1325 and Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Activities

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

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MARIANNA KARAKOULAKI, OCT 31 2012

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, called for gender mainstreaming in relation to peace and security. The term has been widely used and applied to a range of measures and as such requires further examination. This article seeks to do so in the context of UN Peacekeeping activities.

Gender mainstreaming is a term which first emerged as a concept at the Fourth Women's World Forum held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing forum was held in order to address women's inequality and called for women's empowerment. Gender mainstreaming was recognized as the primary mechanism to achieve these goals[1].

While the concept is broad, gender mainstreaming generally seeks the incorporation of a gender perspective into governmental or organisational policies. Importantly gender mainstreaming is an ongoing process with a goal of gender equality, rather than being the goal itself[2]. The concept derives from and is influenced by feminist theories and it was developed in order to support the theoretical analysis of a variety of concepts but especially gender equality[3]. For example Jacqui True[4] sees gender mainstreaming as a combination of liberal feminism, difference feminism and post-structural feminism. Just like liberal feminism, it accepts the demands for the equal representation of both women and men; like difference feminism, it accepts the differences between men and women and that these differences should be taken into account in all policy making stages, from designing a policy until its implementations with women's empowerment as the ultimate goal; and like post-structural feminism, some of the approaches of gender mainstreaming understand the diversity of some policies and try to include this diversity in the policy making process.

There is wide variation in the way international organisations and states define gender mainstreaming, including under UNSCR 1325[5], the United Nations uses the following:

“the process of assessing the implications in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality” [6]

The United Nations officially incorporated gender mainstreaming into its policies at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 1997, which gave emphasis to the need to include gender perspectives in all areas of the United Nations from economic policies to security issues. However, it was not until 2000 with UNSCR 1325 that a commitment was made to mainstream gender perspectives into issues of peace and security, including peacekeeping operations. Up to this point, UN peacekeeping activities were criticised for being gender-blind, failing to take into account the different impact of conflict and post-conflict environments on women and men, along with those who take part in the post-conflict peacebuilding^[7]. Men dominated during the conflict in military peacekeeping roles but also post-conflict during the reconciliation process^[8].

In this context UNSCR1325 on Women, Peace and Security was ground breaking because it had the potential to transform UN peacekeeping activities and marked a historical moment for the UN Security Council[9]. Indicatively, it

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was the first time that the Security Council dedicated an entire session solely on gender issues and particularly on women's participation in conflict and post-conflict situations[10].

Despite UNSCR 1325 groundbreaking nature, the transformative potential of the Resolution, especially on peacekeeping operations, has been called into question. The primary critique has been the weaknesses embodied in the language of the Resolution, particularly its essentialising nature[11]. For example when gender is mentioned it refers to women in particular and not to both genders[12]. This is problematic because it can be inferred that women are naturally born peacemakers and this is why they should be included in peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities[13]. However, characterising women as a homogenous group of natural born peacemakers eradicates the differences among them. Furthermore, the use of gender specific language highlights a significant contradiction with the Resolution. This is that UNSCR 1325 targets women specifically and not both genders, yet calls for gender mainstreaming. As a result the gender mainstreaming advocated by the Resolution is in danger of becoming 'women mainstreaming'.

Despite the problematic rhetoric of UN SCR 1325, gender mainstreaming surrounding UN Peacekeeping operations has not been a complete failure. Not only has women's participation in governmental positions grown in post-conflict societies but they have played important roles in decision making processes[14]. Post-conflict statistical evidence provided by the UN, shows a rise in parliamentary seats taken by women in areas where peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities have taken place[15].

In addition, another positive impact of gender mainstreaming within the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities is that specific training was provided to the UN peacekeepers, and gender training materials related to the gender implications of the peacekeepers' work were developed[16]. Despite the fact that the gender-specific policies only focus on certain areas of peacebuilding, such as in the economic sector or the governmental reform, they have proven beneficial for the population living in post-conflict regions[17].

Nevertheless, in spite of the historical importance of UNSCR 1325, gender mainstreaming within peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, while not a failure, has not been an overarching success either. This is because of the lack of clear understanding of the concept not only by the United Nations as an institution but also by the local governments that have tried to implement gender mainstreaming under the UN mandates.

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[1] Moser. C. & A. Moser (2005), "Gender Mainstreaming Since Beijing: A Review of Success and Limitations in International Institutions", Gender and Development, Vol. 13(2), pp.11-22 ;

Hafner-Burton, E. & M. Pollack (2002), "Mainstreaming Gender in Global Governance", European Journal of International Relations, Vol.8 (3), pp. 339-373

[2] Stratigaki, M. (2005), "Gender Mainstreaming vs Positive Action: An Ongoing Conflict in the EU Gender Equality Policy", European Journal of Women's Studies, Vol.12 (2), pp. 165-186; Daly, M.E. (2005), "Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice", Social Politics, Vol. 12 (3); Squires, J. (2005), "Is Mainstreaming Trasforamtive? Theorizing Mainstreaming in the Context of Diversity and Deliberation", Social Politics, Vol. 12 (3), pp. 366-388; Beveridge, F., S. Nott & K.

UNSCR 1325 and Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Activities

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Stephen (2000), "Mainstreaming, and the Engendering of Policy –Making: A Means to an End?", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 7(3), pp. 385-405

[3] See: Stratigaki, M. (2005), "Gender Mainstreaming vs Positive Action: An Ongoing Conflict in the EU Gender Equality Policy", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol.12 (2), pp. 165-186; Daly, M.E. (2005), "Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice", *Social Politics*, Vol. 12 (3); Rao, A. & D. Kelleher (2005), "Is There life After Gender Mainstreaming?", *gender and Development*, Vol. 13 (2), pp. 57-69; Squires, J. (2005), "Is Mainstreaming Trasforamtive? Theorizing Mainstreaming in the Context of Diversity and Deliberation", *Social Politics*, Vol. 12 (3), pp. 366-388; Walby, S. (2005), "Gender Mainstreaming : Productive Tensions in Theory and Practice", *Social Politics*, Vol. 12 (3), pp. 321-343; True, J. (2009), "Mainstreaming Gender in International Institutions" in L. Shepherd ed. *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, (Oxon: Routledge), pp. 191-205; Booth, C. & C. Bennett, "Gender Mainstreaming in the European Union: Towards a New Conception and Practice of Equal Opportunities?" *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol.9, pp 430-443

[4] True, J. (2009), "Mainstreaming Gender in International Institutions" in L. Shepherd ed. *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, (Oxon: Routledge), pp. 191-205

[5] For example the European Union and its member states use the definition set by the Council of Europe which defines gender mainstreaming as "(...) *the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making*" (Council of Europe (1998), Rec(98)14E on Gender Mainstreaming. Available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=1497046&SecMode=1&DocId=491098&Usage=2>);

The International Labour Organisation defines gender mainstreaming as set of processes that "Include gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, women and men together or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination" (cited in Anderlini 2007, p. 200)

For more look into the EU's definition and the Labour Organisation's definition

[6] Economic and Social Council of the United Nations 1997/2. Available at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-3.htm>

[7] Ramsbotham, O., T. Woodhouse & H. Miall (2005), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution. The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press)

[8] Moghadam, V. (2005), "Peacebuilding and Reconstruction with Women: Reflections on

UNSCR 1325 and Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Activities

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine” in *Development*, Vol. 28 pp. 62-72

[9] Pratt, N. & S. Richter-Devroe (2011), “Critically Examining UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 13(4), pp. 504-521; Shepherd, L. (2011), “Sex, Security and Superhero(in)es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 13(4), pp. 504-521

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[10] Cohn, C. , H. Kinsella & S. Gibbings (2004), “Women, Peace and Security Resolution 1325”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 6(1), pp. 130-140; Pratt, N. & S. Richter-Devroe (2011), “Critically Examining UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 13(4), pp. 504-521

[11] Cohn, C. (2004), “Mainstreaming gender in UN Security Policy: A Path to political Transformation?” Working Paper No. 204, Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Purkarthofer, P. (2006), Gender and Gender Mainstreaming in International Peacebuilding, ISA Conference, March 22-25, 2006; Shepherd, L. (2009) ed. , *Gender Matters in Global Politics: A Feminist Introduction to International Relations*, (Routledge)

[12] Shepherd, L. (2011), “Sex, Security and Superhero(in)es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 13(4), pp. 504-521

[13] Cohn, C. (2004), “Mainstreaming gender in UN Security Policy: A Path to political Transformation?” Working Paper No. 204, Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Gizelis, T. (2009), “ Gender Empowerment and United Nations Peacebuilding”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46

[14] Zuckerman, E. & M. Greenberg (2005), “The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction. An Analytical Framework for Policymakers” in C. Sweetman, *Gender, Peacebuilding and Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxfam GB); Anderlini, S. N. (2007), *Women Building Peace. What They Do. Why It Matters* (USA Lynne Rienner)

[15] For more information see: United Nations Statistics Division. Available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/>

[16] Porter, E. (2007), *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective* (Routledge); Gibbings, S. (2011), “No Angry Women at the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 13(4), pp. 522-538

UNSCR 1325 and Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Activities

Written by Marianna Karakoulaki

[17] Rehn, E. & E. Sirleaf (2002), *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impacts of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peacebuilding*, United Nations Fund for Women; Zuckerman, E. & M. Greenberg (2005), "The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction. An Analytical Framework for Policymakers" in C. Sweetman, *Gender, Peacebuilding and Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxfam GB)

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