

More Questions than Answers? 12 Years on from UNSCR 1325

Written by Katharine Wright

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KATHARINE WRIGHT, OCT 31 2012

The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) on October the 31st 2000[i] was ground-breaking. Not only was this the first time the Security Council had acknowledged the important role women should play in peace and security, but also because of the leading role the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security[ii] played in both drafting and lobbying for the Resolution.

12 years on from the adoption of UNSCR 1325, and with only 37 member states out of 193 having produced National Action Plans, the Resolution has highlighted the limitations and contradictions of the international system and raised just as many questions about the role of women and gender in conflict as it sought to address.

This compilation of articles and blogs published on e-IR over the last few months was compiled to mark the 12th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. Each article takes a closer look at the implementation of UN SCR 1325 by a variety of actors and seeks to reflect on what can be learnt from particular implementations of UN SCR 1325. What we discover from these articles is that examining the implementation of UN SCR 1325 exposes unresolved issues related to peace and security and the tenacity of unintended consequences. This is without the inclusion of a reflection on the silences pertaining to UNSCR 1325, including most pressingly the states which have not implemented it and especially those involved in conflicts. In this collection we intended to stimulate a wider discussion on the impact UNSCR 1325 has had on issues of peace and security.

In the first article, Soumita Basu discusses the Security Council's work on women, peace and security. Drawing on the changing dynamics of the Security Council, Basu outlines the conditions which made UNSCR 1325 possible. In particular Basu draws on the changing nature of relationships within the Security Council P5 in relation to the issue of women, peace and security. The UK initially played an active role as a proponent of UNSCR 1325, but has subsequently taken a back seat, with the US overseeing the adoption of the additional Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

In her latest blog Roberta Guerrina unpacks the hegemonic power discourse emerging from the UK's implementation of UN SCR 1325. The UK is one of the few states to have not only implemented the Resolution but to have revised their National Action Plan. Guerrina takes a comparison of the National Action Plans as her starting point before moving to look at the contrasting approaches taken by the responsible ministerial departments the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Trade and Development and the impact this has had on the UK's overall plan.

Melanie Hoewer's examination of UN SCR 1325 in Northern Ireland draws attention to the opportunities, challenges and complexities of implementing the Resolution. Northern Ireland remains constitutionally torn in relation to UN SCR 1325, having been excluded from the UK's National Action Plan, which it should be part of, but acknowledged by Ireland's National Action Plan which has no binding effect. Yet, civil society remains actively engaged on the issue.

The surprising implementation of UN SCR 1325 by NATO is examined by Katharine Wright, who asks whether NATO's reinterpretation of UN SCR 1325, to advocate increasing women in the military, has shed new light on the

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limitations of the transformative potential of UN SCR 1325 when it is used to support a militarist agenda.

Marianna Karakoulaki looks at the provision of UNSCR 1325 for gender mainstreaming in the context of UN Peacekeeping Operations and uncovers some of the difficulties associated with the contested concept.

Finally a recent book review for e-IR makes a particularly salient addition to the discussion. In *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense* Annica Kronsell examines the case of Sweden, which is particularly relevant given that Sweden has taken a proactive approach to implementing UN SCR 1325 and highlights some of the unintended consequences, including the articulation of alternative forms of masculinities as a result of gender training. In addition Kronsell draws on the European Union's approach to gender mainstreaming in ESDP, which has found difficulty in translating an understanding of gender into something which is relevant in practice to the everyday operations. An important point to highlight and one which perhaps goes a long way to explaining why UN SCR 1325 has been implemented by so few states.

The intention of this compilation of articles was not only to mark the anniversary of UNSCR 1325, but to stimulate a debate on the unintended consequences resulting from the implementation of the resolution by states and international organisations and to draw attention to the silences surrounding UNSCR 1325.

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[i] The provisions of UNSCR 1325 can be categorised into three pillars; first, the participation of women at all levels of decision-making; second, gender mainstreaming in decision making processes; and third, the protection of women from violence during and post-conflict. It is important to note that the provisions of UNSCR 1325 were subsequently reinforced by 3 further resolutions which should be read as an extension of the umbrella of resolutions on women, peace and security stemming from UNSCR 1325. In 2008 and 2009 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1820, 1888 and 1889. UNSCR 1820 and 1888 are directed at ending conflict-related sexual violence, while UNSCR 1889 reinforces the provisions of UNSCR 1325 calling for women's leadership in peacemaking and conflict prevention and for a monitoring system and set of indicators on UNSCR 1325.

[ii] The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security brought together a number of NGOs in June 2000 to lobby the Security Council on the issues and they continue to do so. More information can be found on their webpage: <http://womenpeacesecurity.org/about/>

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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 Haastrup 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.