

The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: A Focus on Patriarchal Gender Relations and Militarized Masculinities is Required

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Executive Summary

Although the UN's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda has improved conditions for women and girls worldwide, the success of these efforts has been limited by a lack of attention to the structural causes of gender inequality propagated by patriarchal gender relations and militarized masculinities. A targeted feminist-informed approach that endeavors to transform masculinities is urgently needed. The UN Security Council should pass a new resolution building upon UNSCR 1325 and the associated resolutions that challenges gender norms and gender inequality by specifically addressing patriarchal gender relations and militarized masculinities.

1. Introduction

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the UN's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda that was established when the UN Security Council unanimously adopted UNSCR 1325 on October 31, 2000. UNSCR 1325 formally recognized the importance of including women in peace processes and acknowledged the increase in civilians being targeted in armed conflict. Underscoring the importance of understanding how women and girls are differently impacted by conflict, UNSCR 1325 calls on Member States and parties to conflict to adopt a gender perspective when implementing peace agreements.ⁱ

Although progress has been made to recognize the unique contributions of women in peace processes and many Member States have taken steps to implement UNSCR 1325 and the

associated resolutions, women remain underrepresented in governance, continue to suffer from persistent gender inequality across sectors, and remain at significant risk of gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence in practically every context. More than 750 million women and girls are married before reaching the age of 18, one in five women and girls have experienced intimate partner violence within the last year, laws protecting women from domestic violence are lacking in 49 countries, daughters and sons do not share equal inheritance rights in 39 countries, and women's representation in national parliaments is only 23.7 percent globally.ⁱⁱ

After nearly 20 years of targeted international attention to the issue of gender inequality, women and girls continue to experience violence and discrimination at alarming rates. The UN has acknowledged that gender equality is a fundamental human right and that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved so long as women and girls remain disadvantaged and marginalized. On this 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the UN must reevaluate its approach. The success of the WPS agenda has been significantly limited by a lack of attention to the structural causes of gender inequality propagated by patriarchal gender relations and militarized masculinities. A targeted feminist-informed approach that endeavors to transform masculinities is urgently needed. This paper will argue that the UN Security Council should pass a new resolution building upon UNSCR 1325 and the associated resolutions that challenges gender norms and gender inequality by specifically addressing patriarchal gender relations and militarized masculinities.

2. UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda

UNSCR 1325 was the first of a total of nine resolutions on women, peace, and security adopted by the UN Security Council.ⁱⁱⁱ Collectively, these resolutions form the international policy framework dedicated to advancing gender equality. Through the incorporation of a gender

perspective, the WPS agenda aims to protect the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The resolutions are binding requiring Member States, UN entities, and parties to conflict to implement UNSCR 1325 and the associated resolutions in relevant policy.^{iv}

A key component of the WPS agenda is the requirement for Member States to adopt National Action Plans (NAPs) in support of UNSCR 1325. Unfortunately, less than half of all Member States have drafted a NAP and many plans lack the substance required to be effective. According to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 83 Member States (43 percent) have NAPs. Of these, 34 percent include a budget, 30 percent include specifics about disarmament, and 75 percent include civil society actors in the process.^v

2.1 Implementation of UNSCR 1325

UNSCR 1325 was built on four pillars designed to address gender inequality including, prevention, participation, protection, and peacebuilding and recovery.^{vi} Under these four pillars are 26 qualitative and quantitative indicators collectively titled the Global Indicators. Among these include prevalence and patterns of sexual violence, number and percentage of women in governance, education enrollment rates disaggregated by sex, and total budget and spending on efforts to increase gender equality. Although monitoring progress on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 remains a challenge, these indicators have improved monitoring capacity.^{vii}

Another mechanism for monitoring implementation is the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS. The group was created in 2016 in response to the Council's reaffirmation of commitment to systematic oversight and coordination of the WPS agenda detailed in UNSCR 2242. Although UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2000, this is the only Security Council Working Group on WPS.^{viii}

2.2. Ongoing Implementation Challenges

In 2015, UN Women commissioned a global study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The report provides an assessment of implementation and enforcement efforts and analyzes the missing incentives and measures of accountability required to encourage compliance. Notably, the study includes a discussion on efforts to achieve peace in an increasingly militarized world. The authors assert that “it cannot be denied that military forces, both national and international, along with armed groups will continue to play a major role in the peace and security agenda of the United Nations” and recognizes the failure of UN efforts to reduce violent conflict. Rather than conclude that engagement with military actors and armed groups to change attitudes and behaviors toward women and girls who suffer disproportionately in conflict and post-conflict contexts is essential, the study asserts that including more women in military forces is the best solution.^{ix}

The study makes one indirect reference to militarized masculinity noting that awareness raising activities around women’s rights and masculinity may be useful in a given context. The importance of general opposition to militarization is acknowledged, but there is no discussion around addressing the root causes. The impacts of patriarchal structures and cultural bias are mentioned; however, these concepts are not sufficiently linked to militarized masculinities. Absent further discussion or evidence, the study then recommends that the UN, Member States, and civil society “Provide financial, technical and political support to encourage educational and leadership training for men, women, boys and girls, which reinforces and supports non-violent, non-militarized expressions of masculinity.”^x Although this recommendation is useful, the study fails to recognize the need to specifically address patriarchal norms and militarized masculinity.

This lack of attention to militarization is echoed in the November 2016 IEG meeting with women’s protection advisers focused on implementing the mandate to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The Senior Women’s Protection Advisor from the UN Mission in South Sudan

(UNMISS) outlined a strategy to combat conflict-related sexual violence framed around five pillars. These included prevention, monitoring, mainstreaming conflict-related sexual violence, capacity building, and technical support for the government. Weak institutions, trivialization of sexual violence, and lack of understanding of human rights were noted as challenges, but reference to the impacts of militarization were missing. Although advocacy for training of military forces was a common theme, no suggestions for gender transformative programming were offered.^{.xi}

UNSCR 1325 officially recognizes the gendered impacts of armed conflict on women and girls and underscores the need for immediate action. The associated resolutions specifically acknowledge the prevalence and impacts of conflict-related sexual violence, the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war, and the imperative of justice for survivors.^{.xii} The implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the associated resolutions have enabled some progress toward gender equality, however, progress on the WPS agenda has stalled because patriarchy and militarized masculinity have not been adequately analyzed and addressed as root causes of gender inequality and violence.

3. Militarization and Gender Inequality

Under patriarchal systems that create gendered hierarchies, men hold power while women are largely excluded from accessing it. Men's continued dominance in political and corporate leadership roles, social privilege, and economic advantage illustrates how patriarchal systems disproportionately benefit men. Further entrenching gendered hierarchies are pervasive attitudes around the supremacy of masculinities over femininities that result in reduced value placed on women and girls in relation to men and boys. In an effort to express dominance and retain positions of power, some men engage in gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence.^{.xiii} These acts of violence are often performative based on hegemonic definitions that inform what society expects

of a 'real man.' Hegemonic masculinity then legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of femininities resulting in this persistent devaluing of women and girls.^{xiv} Militarized masculinity, a form of hegemonic masculinity that situates the meaning of manhood within military values,^{xv} contributes to all forms of violence against women and girls.^{xvi} This serves to further entrench gendered hierarchies and prevents women and girls from full and equal participation in civil, political, and social aspects of public life. Analyzing the interrelatedness of patriarchy, performativity, and militarized masculinity is essential to understanding how these factors prevent success of the WPS agenda.

3.1. Militarism, Militarization, and Militarized Masculinity

Examining the impact of militarism and militarization on patriarchal societies is key to identifying the damaging role that militarized masculinities play in shaping communities. The meaning of and differences between militarism and militarization must first be understood. Cynthia Enloe explains that militarism is the underlying ideology or accepted set of beliefs about how the world is structured.^{xvii} Among the core principles of militarism are acceptance that conflict is part of human nature, that tensions are best resolved through the use of armed force, that women and girls need protection during times of crisis, and that men who refuse to engage in armed conflict will fall short of achieving status as a man. Militarization is the multi-faceted social and political process that serves to further entrench militarism as the foundational ideology. Militarization is not inevitable but is often purposefully cultivated with the intention of entrenching the primacy of masculinities over femininities.^{xviii} Understanding the impacts of militarized masculinity first requires a brief exploration of masculinities.

Traditional notions of masculinities include ideas and attributes such as strength, leadership, dominance, control, and protector. Terrell Carver explains, “Masculinity not only works to confer power on men over women, but also to empower masculinized individuals and groups over feminized ones, and to create power hierarchies of men over men, as well as some masculinities over others.”^{xix} Like femininities, masculinities are complex and multi-dimensional. The difference is that patriarchal gender hierarchy places men and masculinities in a position of superiority over women and femininities.^{xx} Cynthia Cockburn explains that the primacy of masculinity enables patriarchy to reproduce itself. Boys and men are taught that they must embrace these ideas and attributes in order to utilize their power and to underscore their entitlement and privilege as masculine men.^{xxi} Ultimately, masculinity demands that boys and men demonstrate an ability to wield power over others, especially through the use of force. Moreover, men are often held responsible for exemplifying the strength and virility of the community.^{xxii} The degree to which masculinity has been militarized exhibits the magnitude of militarism’s impact.

3.1.1. Militarized Masculinity

Militarized masculinity is shaped by military values associated with military institutions and activities. Such masculinities are constructed through military service or the aspiration to participate in armed forces.^{xxiii} Recalling that Enloe explained that militarization is not inevitable but purposefully cultivated,^{xxiv} it must be underscored that men are not inherently predisposed to violence nor is masculinity violent by nature.^{xxv} Rather, within most societies exists a firmly held belief that boys become men through military service or through the adoption of the values that military service promotes. In order to achieve power and control, militarized masculinity depends on the creation of an enemy or a weaker group over which to dominate.^{xxvi} Jennifer Mathers explains, “Central to the links between men, hegemonic masculinity, and the military is the

ideological construction of the military (staffed by masculine men) as the protector of society and especially of those who are too weak and vulnerable to protect themselves (primarily women and children).”^{xxvii} In societies rooted in militarism and entrenched in militarization, violence and war will remain preferable to non-violence and peace, making achievement of gender equality near impossible. The successful development of militarized masculinity depends on the subjugation of femininity and presentation of attributes that bestow dominance and power.^{xxviii}

3.1.2. Performativity and Militarized Masculinities

The concept of gender performativity was developed more than 30 years ago by Judith Butler. She asserted that behavior is not gender specific nor determined at birth but is a performance that reflects the gendered expectations prevalent in society.^{xxix} This is essential in discussing militarized masculinity because it informs how and why masculinity succumbs to militarization. Masculinity is often associated with war and violent conflict and the attributes required to become a warrior are valorized and rewarded. Both men and women learn that success is dependent upon aligning with behaviors considered masculine over those considered feminine. Masculinity then becomes a performance of power and control through the domination over the feminine. Societies worldwide have telegraphed to men that when they challenge the gender roles to which they have been assigned, they lose the power and privilege associated with the performance of masculine values.^{xxx} Therefore, men who align with peace risk losing not only power and privilege, but also the gendered identity that enables their continued success in society.

3.1.3. Protest Masculinity

Men may be compelled to perform gendered masculinities for a variety of context-specific reasons. David Duriesmith’s case study on Sierra Leone highlights the employment of protest

masculinity as a means to claim manhood amidst disenfranchisement from hegemonic masculinity. He explains that when “men are unable to attain the full status of manhood through hegemonic routes such as social status, economic enrichment or obtaining women as wives, they act out exaggerated masculine practices such as sporadic violence and risk taking.”^{xxxix} As a result, new wars and violent conflict may erupt in protest against the exclusion of men from social systems deemed necessary to achieve manhood. Young men who lacked access to employment and were then stigmatized because they remained poor and unmarried took to violence to achieve domination.^{xxxix} The decision to resort to violence rather than asserting efforts by peaceful means is a result of gender performativity informed by societal expectations of how men achieve goals.

3.1.4. Gender, Masculinity, and Nation

Manhood is also inextricably linked to historical ideas around the nation state. Since ancient times, the willingness to fight and die for one’s country has been linked to notions of citizenship and gendered hierarchies that have served to prevent women’s full participation in public life. These linkages have further entrenched patriarchal norms as women have only recently been given access to military organizations.^{xxxix} Despite increased participation in societal governance and policy-making, legislation that relates to women’s rights and inclusion largely remains separate from the mainstream.^{xxxix} Nira Yuval-Davis explains that women’s increased inclusion in military spaces as a result of progressive policies is considered a threat to militarized masculinity because women’s participation “can erode one of the most powerful cultural constructions of national collectivities - that of women and children - as the reason men go to war.”^{xxxix} Believing in militarism requires that masculinities are valorized over femininities. The process of militarization cannot continue to preserve power and control for men if women are viewed as equal citizens. Therefore, militarized masculinity demands that gender inequality persist

to ensure men remain the warriors that serve as the protectors of the feminine nation-state.^{xxxvi} Analyzing the outcomes of increased inclusion in traditionally male spaces, Yuval-Davis notes that the othering of women's interests is intentional as the participation of women in the military and other centers of power threaten to erode patriarchal structures that reserve power for men.

3.2. Militarized Masculinity in Politics and Governance

Just as militarized masculinity impacts attitudes and behaviors among armed actors, so too does militarization influence politics and governance. Carver explains that militarism has permeated the political sphere as expectations of the warrior have been adapted for the political arena. Entrenched in national security and the need to protect the homeland, the political warrior relies on notions of masculinity that serve to reinforce the patriarchy.^{xxxvii} Jennifer Mathers notes that the military is often the most powerful department of the State, which is especially striking when compared to sectors generally considered feminine like health care and education. Even when a nation's military is under civilian control, political leaders often value the perspectives of military leaders on national security as well as foreign policy matters over civilian advisors.^{xxxviii}

Again, Enloe emphasizes the importance of considering how masculinities impact the political sphere noting that many world powers, most of whom are still led by men, regularly assert that we live in a dangerous world. Enloe points out that this notion reinforces the primacy of masculinity while subordinating women and femininity. Specifically, men in a dangerous world are the protectors and women require protection as they are (of course) incapable of dealing with threats.^{xxxix} Enloe notes that little attention has been paid to analyzing men in spaces reserved for men.^{xl} This gap in feminist curiosity underscores the need to deliberately address militarized masculinity and the impacts of patriarchy as barriers to full gender equality.

4. Militarized Masculinity and Violence Against Women and Girls

Although not all men commit acts of violence, a well-documented body of evidence has shown that the root causes of gender inequality and violence against women and girls include patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and gender hierarchy in institutions and systems.^{xli} A recent UN study investigating reasons men commit acts of violence against women and girls found that men who had less power compared to other men were more likely to be violent. Violence occurred more regularly when the perpetrator had power over the targets of his aggression and where the normalization of violence and impunity were common. Gender inequality, militarized masculinity, and unequal power relations were identified as causes of partner violence and non-partner rape.^{xlii}

Aisling Swaine emphasizes that regardless of the specific drivers of violence in a given context, it remains of utmost importance to recognize that there is no singular experience of violence for women and girls trapped in armed conflict.^{xliii} Understanding the underlying social, economic, and political context and the degree of militarism and militarization present before the start of active conflict is important to understanding how violence will be exacerbated during and after conflict. Acknowledging that the same men who are perpetrating non-partner violence against a perceived enemy may be responsible for intimate partner violence at home is also crucial.^{xliv}

Although the focus of this paper is on violence against women and girls, it is important to recognize that men are also victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and that these experiences impact masculinities. The possibility of being both masculine and a survivor of sexual violence is anathema to heteronormative gendered understandings of manhood. A male survivor is likely to believe that he should have been able to protect himself from sexual violation and that he should be able to manage the consequences with strength and stoicism.^{xlv} Returning to the notion of

gender performativity, male survivors may engage in sexual violence against women and girls in an effort to realign with expectations associated with militarized masculinity.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The connection between militarized masculinity and the prevalence of violence against women and girls is clear. Despite progress since UNSCR 1325 was passed 20 years ago, the WPS agenda will not succeed unless militarism and militarization are addressed. The UN Security Council should pass a new resolution building upon UNSCR 1325 and the associated resolutions that challenges gender norms and gender inequality by specifically addressing militarized masculinities and patriarchal gender relations. In this new resolution, the Security Council should:

- Reaffirm previous commitments to ending violence against women and girls, emphasize the importance of including women and girls in civil, political, and social aspects of public life, and recognize the need for a different approach to achieving gender equality.
- Recognize that gender inequality, militarized masculinity, and unequal power relations are among the root causes of violence against women and girls.
- Further recognize that gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence are not confined to the public sphere as weapons of war, and that intimate partner and domestic violence remain prevalent and tend to increase during and after armed conflict.
- Call upon Member States to include feminist-informed gender analyses with a specific focus on patriarchy and militarized masculinity as part of their National Action Plans.
- Urge Member States to employ gender transformative approaches aimed at upending patriarchal gender norms and power inequalities in humanitarian emergencies.
- Urge Member States to address patriarchal norms and gender hierarchies within their ranks.
- Urge Member States to ensure that men and boys are engaged as part of the solution.

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- ^{iv} Ibid.
- ^v “Member States.” PeaceWomen, December 12, 2019. <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.
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