

## Co-Optation of Feminism: Gender, Militarism and the UNSC Resolution 1325

### Abstract

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is often referred to as a landmark resolution. Despite its revolutionary potential, I argue that the Resolution was developed through gendered discourses that allowed its use for militarist purposes. Informed by poststructuralist international relations feminist theory, I refer to the Resolution as a discursive practice and claim that the ways in which the UN conceptual apparatus understands and interprets gender and security open up possibilities for states to co-opt the very radical meaning of the Resolution by legitimising and normalising militarist practicing and silencing anti-militarist critique. In order to show this, I examine the gendered discourses behind the creation of the Resolution, and address two major ways (including the ongoing militarisation processes in the Republic of Armenia) by which the Resolution is being militarised.

### Gender, war and militarism in a discursive terrain

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (hereafter UNSCR 1325) is often referred to as a landmark and a revolutionary resolution (Cohn 2008; Shepherd 2015). For the first time, a highly masculinised institution like the UN Security Council directly addressed the subjects of women and armed conflicts. This placed women and armed conflicts on an equal level of importance and recognised women's agency to participate as decision makers in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes (United Nations Security Council 2000). In October 2015, on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Resolution, the Global Study on 1325 was launched (UN Women 2015). The Global Study states, "[w]omen, peace and security is about preventing war, not about making war safer for women" (Coomaraswamy 2015, 191). Despite this important claim, the debates around

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the Resolution show that the Resolution not only fails to advance anti-war feminist agenda, but also gets utilised for militarist purposes, transforming its radical potential into an instrumentalised, co-opted feminist agenda.

Reflecting on antimilitarist feminist debates, I focus in this paper on how gender security discourses within the United Nations (UN) do the process of war. Particularly, I argue that the UNSCR 1325 was developed through gendered discourses that allowed the use of the Resolution for militarist purposes. Informed by poststructuralist feminist theory, I refer to the Resolution as a discursive practice and claim that the ways in which the UN conceptual apparatus understands and interprets gender and security concepts open up possibilities for states to co-opt the very radical meaning of the Resolution by legitimising and normalising militarist practicing and silencing anti-militarist critique.

I propose stepping outside of the conventional polarised understanding of war and peace, and suggest instead focusing on militarisation as a broader and more complex process of “doing” war. Paying attention to discourses is important in order to understand how the ways in which United Nations interprets gender security gives room to militarisation practices. Christine Sylvester suggests that “war is a politics of injury: everything about war aims to injure people and/or their social surroundings” (Sylvester 2012, 3-4). War as a “politics of injury” is a deeply gendered activity (Parashar 2015, 100) and invokes political nurturing of some kind of “militarised masculinity” (Enloe 2000, 100). War is systemic and exists in a continuum (Cockburn 2015, 114). This continuum entails a cycle from militarism, the process of militarisation, the episodes of “hot war” and the agreement to a ceasefire followed by an unsteady peace with sustained military investment and continued violence (Cockburn 2004). Recognising the complex, blurred and diverse expressions and experiences of war, I position this paper outside of the traditionally circumscribed bipolar interpretation of war and peace. Informed by the conceptualisation of Cynthia Enloe on militarism (Enloe 2014; Enloe 2000), I analyse the gender security discourse that sustains *militarisation* rather than *war*, viewing militarisation as a set of interwoven processes that makes war a legitimate never-ending phenomenon.

Cynthia Enloe suggests that militarism is a “step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military *or* comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas” (Enloe 2000, 3). As Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via claim, “militarism is the extension of war-related, war-preparatory and war-based meanings and activities outside of ‘war proper’” (Shepherd 2016, 2). In moulding a culture of war and peace, militarisation entails various different, yet subtle forms and manifestations; therefore, the UNSCR 1325, although initially appearing to subvert patriarchal configurations, has become one of those hidden strategies of masculinised militarisation.

It is crucial to explore how the meanings of gender and gender security have been produced in relation to development and implementation processes of the UNSCR 1325. In this paper, I approach the concept of gender

as performative and as an inherently unstable notion (McLeod 2016, 17), inspired by Judith Butler's (1990) theorising of gender as a "doing" rather than a "being." As Butler puts it, gender is "always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler 1990, 25). Gender performativity entails that gender is a result of discourses. Human beings produce certain practices and knowledge through gendered discourses that have a productive force of power, which means that these very discourses produce and shape the subjects themselves. Therefore, the way gender is interpreted within the UN's conceptual apparatuses is key to understanding how discursive policies are being developed and implemented in practice. In other words which actions do those discourses naturalise and which ones do they leave untackled?

Discourses in the UN matter as much as "language matters in politics" (Shepherd 2010, 144). Laura Shepherd finds that in order to understand how best to implement a policy we need to understand not only what a policy means but also how it comes to its meaning (Shepherd 2010, 144). She finds that discourses are "systems of meaning production rather than simply statements or language" (Shepherd 2010, 156). Following that logic, I suggest that the conceptual organisation of the Resolution prescribes and proscribes certain normative understandings of "security" and "doings" of gender. The value-laden meanings attached to the UNSCR 1325 have profound implications for its implementation. Consequently, we should first critically engage with how the UN's understanding of gender and security has shaped the development and implementation of the Resolution, viewing the Resolution as a discursive practice that implies and proscribes certain kinds of understanding of gender, war and peace.

As Laura McLeod suggests, the specific performance of gender security relies upon a particular logic of "gender" and "security" (McLeod 2011, 595). It is "inherently political" which means that certain actors can use the conceptualisation of gender and opportunities deriving from a specific discourse for their particular goals, achieving specific political translations of UN policies and documents. This means that the ways in which gender and gender security are represented in UN peacebuilding architecture discourse permit and legitimise certain types of actions by the states (support the ongoing process of militarisation) and preclude the others (silence anti-war and anti-militarist critique). In the following sections, I first examine the gendered discourses behind the creation of the Resolution. The next two parts are devoted to the analysis of two major ways by which, I argue, the Resolution is being militarised; the first being the association of gender with "women in need of protection" that justifies foreign militarist interventions and "ensures" protection by enhancing military, and the second being the increase of women's inclusion into the security sector and armed forces in the name of women's "participation" in post-conflict reconstruction. I conclude by arguing that discursive analysis of the Resolution is crucial as it reveals how a Resolution that had a subverting potential to challenge militarised patriarchy reinforces exactly those power structures it was called to dismantle.

## Making war safer for women: Resolution 1325 and herstory

Since 2000, there have been six subsequent resolutions adopted by the Security Council after the UNSCR 1325 that together shaped the “Women, Peace and Security” (WPS) agenda in the United Nations (Shepherd 2015, 273). The WPS agenda contains three main pillars: protection, prevention, and participation. In this section of this paper, I focus on two pillars and claim that both “protection” and “participation” goals are being used by states to increase their industrial military complexes and include more people in militarised security institutions.

It has been argued that the UNSCR 1325 reproduced the conventional understanding of the UN on human security – that the state provides security, that security is the absence of conflict, and that security is something that can be achieved (Shepherd 2008, 127; McLeod 2016, 37; Zajović 2010). As highlighted in the Resolution, the Security Council’s primary responsibility under the UN Charter is the “the maintenance of international peace and security” (United Nations Security Council 2000). Under this logic, gender security in the Resolution is understood as an extension of human security, configured in a way that does not challenge conventional security ideas according to which militaristic institutions are guarantees of ensuring (state) security. Moreover, for many feminist-pacifists, the UNSCR 1325 is problematic because it does not explicitly challenge the existing power structures and assumptions of the war system (Cohn 2008; Cockburn 2007). While the Resolution explicitly calls for women’s protection from violence, and for their inclusion into peace operations and conflict resolution, there is no single paragraph in the Resolution’s text that would tackle the prevention of wars or the militarism per se. With this, the Resolution accepts the a priori existence of war, naturalises the need of militarisation and leaves these phenomena unquestioned, instead of deploying efforts to make *inevitable* wars at least safer for women. That “gender security” is conceptualised in ways that do not challenge militarism and war becomes clear when we look into the herstory of the Resolution.

In 2000, during the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security was formed to advocate for the adoption of the Resolution (Cohn 2008, 4). The drafting process demanded a huge amount of work by many actors, notably by NGOs. Nevertheless, despite its exceptional drafting procedure that united different constituencies, the examination of the root values, original objectives behind the adoption of the Resolution, unpacks a number of crucial facts. Hence, the majority of the Working Group members positioned themselves as neither “anti-war” per se, nor as feminist (Cohn 2008, 12). Out of the six members, only the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) explicitly identified itself as feminist, anti-war and anti-militarist and it did not avoid talking about political issues (Cohn 2008, 12). WILPF suggested discussing the international arms trade, militarism and its relation to masculinities, however, it was

deemed “too political.” The *causes* of armed conflicts were thus assumed to be too radical to be integrated in the Resolution.

The absence of these logics from the Resolution demonstrates discursive practices of the WPS agenda, which can be assumed to duplicate the conventional practices of international peace and security institutions where state security is exercised through military means. As a result, the Resolution protects women *in war*, highlighting that they now have an equal right to participate in ending particular wars, leaving *war* itself intact. The existence of war as a system and the operation of the military-industrial complex are not challenged in the UNSCR 1325 and thus are legitimised. At the same time, it would be too naive to think that Resolution could be able to challenge the existence of war *per se*. When more than 80% of the profits from the global arms trade go to the five permanent members of the Security Council (Cohn 2008, 18) the question about how the Security Council can practically be against wars becomes inane.

Not only war, but also militarised masculinities are not a subject for the Resolution. Nothing is said in the Resolution about men and masculine culture of violence (Cockburn 2013, 444). The Resolution is developed by normalising the understanding that violence against women and girls will always happen, so there is a great need to “protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts,” and to “protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other sexual abuse” (United Nations Security Council 2000). With this, the Resolution does not challenge the patriarchy; the patriarchal system of male dominance is left out of its agenda. The next two sections of this essay show that the Resolution does not only fail to challenge particular war logics but also gets co-opted and instrumentalised for military purposes. I offer two major ways through which militarisation of the Resolution takes place. The first is through the association of gender with “women in need of protection” (the “protection” pillar of UN WPS agenda) and the second is through ensuring women’s “participation” in post-conflict reconstruction via their inclusion into military and security sector (the “participation” pillar).

### **“They will save you with their weapons”: gender as “women in protection”**

As Nadine Puechguirbal points out, in the UN language, women are mainly portrayed as victims in need of protection (Puechguirbal 2015, 254). Despite its groundbreaking approach, the Resolution 1325 still uses the language of victimisation. The Resolution, “expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict” and recognising the impact of “effective institutional arrangements to guarantee [women’s] protection,” calls on measures to “ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls,” to “protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and

other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict” as well as calls upon to “take into account the particular needs of women and girls” (United Nations Security Council 2000). Women in the Resolution are also associated with children, defining them as helpless, vulnerable individuals. Indeed, as Cynthia Enloe puts it, “militaries rely both on women and on presumptions about femininity” (Enloe 2000, x; Enloe 2010, 3). So, the Resolution reinforces the idea that (militarised) men are perceived as the norms of reference and the “protectors,” while women constitute the “others” – the helpless, the “protected,” and “thewomenandchildren.”

One of the ways the UNSCR 1325 is implemented is through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs). Laura Shepherd has analysed the NAPs developed in six countries - Australia, Georgia, Germany, Italy, the UK and the USA. Her findings show that the NAPs predominantly focus on “protecting women” and “making war safe” for them. A number of NAPs such as those adopted by the USA, UK and Australia also represent war and insecurity “overseas” rather than in their respective countries (Shepherd 2016, 1), upholding the idea of extra-territorial engagement (Kronsell 2012, 5) that opens up possibilities for foreign (military) interventions.

Drawing on Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, Audrey Reeves highlights that within governmentalised UN peacekeeping discourses certain rationales for military intervention in the post-colonial world are justified (Reeves 2012, 350). Hence, the discourse of women in need of protection may maintain global hierarchies and uphold “colonial feminism” (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009a). For instance, the UNSCR 1325 was used in the preamble of the Security Council Resolution 1483 on Iraq when, it can be argued, women’s inclusion into reconstruction was used in the name of justifying military occupation and rhetoric on “liberating” oppressed women (Cohn et al. 2004, 138). For Moghadam, too, the Resolution was side-lined in the name of the “global war on terror” (Moghadam 2015, 339). The colonial intelligibilities and practices thus still continue to work in the name of protection (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2015, 43). Ignoring the intersections of class, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity or other important aspects, the UNSCR 1325 continues to reproduce “white western heterosexual feminism” (Santos, Roque, and Moura 2013; Pratt 2013) failing to interrogate capitalism, neo-colonialism or imperialism and integrate intersectional and postcolonial feminist approaches.

In the name of women’s protection, the UNSCR 1325 and the “protection” pillar of the WPS agenda are being deliberately used for states’ militarist, imperialist or neo-colonial objectives. Gender is interpreted by the UN as “women in need of protection” while gender security is seen within the prisms of conventional state-centered militarised understanding of security. The way in which gender and gender security logics work throughout the Resolution and how the UN interprets them is thus crucial because it is exactly due to these manipulations of discursive representations that the co-optation of the Resolution becomes possible. Protection, however, is not the only strategy de-

ployed for militarisation of the Resolution. Focusing on the example of Armenia, the last section of the essay discusses how women's participation secures the militarist agenda of the states and leaves the masculine power paradigms unchallenged.

### **“We can do it!” Women's inclusion into security sector and armed forces**

Recognising “the need to increase [women's] role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,” the Resolution 1325 “urges the Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.” It also “encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (*A/49/587*) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes.” It is interesting to observe the disproportionate ways in which the “participation” of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation takes place in Armenia. Particularly, the inclusion of women in decision-making and peace negotiation processes can be compared to the proliferating increase of women's presence in the military institutions. The examination of extremely scarce data on the subject of 1325 in the country shows that women's participation in the security sector is the major “implementation area” of the UNSCR 1325 and is highly disproportionate to the level of women's participation shift in other sectors.

Hence, as of 2016, there are only 12 women out of 131 members in Armenia's National Parliament. Only two ministers are female, and the percentage of women ministers never underwent any significant changes in recent years (Shahnazaryan 2015). Women are excluded from any formal peace negotiation efforts and their peace efforts remain on a marginal non-formal level (The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation 2012; Goris Women's Development “Resource Center” Foundation et al. 2013). The same tendency, however, is not observed when it comes to women's participation in the security sector. Armenia is undergoing security sector reforms, and one of the components of the reforms is to encourage the engagement of more women in the security sector (Armenpress 2015). Hence, in June 2013, Armenia's Defence Ministry announced that women became eligible for admission at two major military institutes of the country (Abrahamyan 2013) which was later reported as a big step toward the implementation of the Resolution. In Armenia, the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 thus is equated to women's participation in Armenian defence and military structures, which suggests that women can be secured through equalising opportunities. It also suggests that gender security is viewed within the militarised vision of security.

The most vivid example of how Armenia complies with its commitments against the Resolution is the strengthening of the partnership between Ar-

menia and NATO aimed at successful implementation of the Resolution 1325 (NATO 2016). In fact, a close look into the set outcomes and the actions by the NATO/EAPC Action Plan 2014-2016 is enough to understand the massive scope of militarisation in the name of the Resolution (NATO 2014). As stated in the policy, “NATO’s fundamental and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means” (NATO 2014, emphasis is added). Meanwhile, the co-optation of the Resolution by NATO in different countries is not a new phenomenon and was observed by a number of anti-militarist feminists (Cockburn 2009).

In November 2014, in order to strengthen NATO-Armenia alliances, a “NATO week” was organised in Armenia, one of the themes being the UNSCR 1325’s domestic implementation (Leach 2014; UNFPA 2015). Not surprisingly, the official event held in the frames of the Resolution was organised by the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNFPA Armenia, which once again emphasised Armenia’s militarist and liberal approach to the implementation of the Resolution. Similar events were organised in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

Hence, on April 3rd, 2015, RA Ministry of Defence hosted NATO Secretary General’s Special Representative of Women, Peace and Security, Ambassador Marriët Schuurman. During the meeting, the Resolution 1325 was discussed. As stated by the Ministry of Defence, the strategy deployed by the Republic of Armenia towards the implementation of the Resolution is successful the indicators of which are women’s inclusion into the security sector and security politics as well as the increasing number of females in military institutions (Մարիետ Շուրմանի գլխավորած պատվիրակությունը...2015).

In November of the same year, UNFPA Armenia, RA Ministry of Defence and RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a workshop on the implementation of the Resolution 1325 where representatives from the NATO, different international organisations and diplomatic agencies, civil society, and academia were present. Mr. Vahan Asatryan, Senior Expert at the International Center for Human Development spoke about the study supported by UNFPA on the inclusion of women in the sphere of defence in Armenia. Mr. Artur Atanesyan, Head of Chair of Applied Sociology at Yerevan State University presented the upcoming book “Woman and the Army” that covers the involvement of women in the armed forces (UNFPA 2015).

Not surprisingly, during the “NATO week” 2016 in Yerevan, the NATO Liaison Officer in the South Caucasus William Lahue has noticed at an event entitled “Women in the military forces” that “Women’s role and significance in the military forces have been neglected for many years, however, the United Nations and the NATO do acknowledge and recognise them” (Կանայք ՀՀ զինված ուժերում...2016). These examples show how women’s inclusion in security is interpreted as the Resolution’s ultimate goal. Women’s growing participation in the military and the misuse of the Resolution 1325 is not, however, an external intervention from the global militaries, but rather a reciprocal, mutually beneficial process of ongoing militarisation. Under the “Na-

tion-Army” paradigm adopted by the Armenian ruling elite (News.am 2016) according to which the nation is equalised to the army, and Armenian society is transformed into an army-society, women’s agenda becomes just another area of co-optation for nationalist militarist purposes.

It can be stated that the inclusion of women in militaries suggests that WPS agenda should be implemented because it enables states to make war *better* (Shepherd 2016). In fact, adding more women into an institution whose *raison d’être* is to use violence against the “other” in order to uphold the security of “another” (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009b: 170) is not a radical action. It is problematic to think that the “add women and stir” strategy can help to change the militarised masculinity. As Hannah Wright puts it, “are calls to recruit more women really feminizing the military, or just militarizing feminism?” (Wright 2015, 505). This rhetoric question leads to the idea that the power structures that feminists want to dismantle are the very structures that condition the women’s entry into decision-making (Cohn et al. 2004, 138). Therefore, within the UNSCR 1325, women are included into security sector and the armed forces in ways that do not subvert the fundamentally masculinised culture of the military, leaving the unequal power structures and war system unquestioned.

## Conclusion

The UNSCR 1325 has a potential to subvert hegemonic gender norms and support the critical reconceptualization of gender security. However, in this essay I argued that despite its revolutionary potential, the UNSCR 1325 continues to perpetuate the war system which it is supposed to dismantle, transforming women’s agenda into another instrument to achieve political goals defined by and for men. The lack of inquiry on how “gender” and “gender security” are understood and applied by the UN does not merely leave the war system intact but also normalises war for militarised actors in power. It harnesses women’s agency in the reproduction of power structures within the neo-liberal imperium in the name of women’s “protection” and “participation” and thus not only fails to challenge the militarisation but also militarises feminism itself.

Questioning the operation of the UN security apparatus and dismantling its conventional interpretation of gender and gender security is a daring strategy. However, it is important to critically reflect on the language the UN uses because the discourses that it produces shape the implementation of its Resolutions. Discursive practices construct, produce and legitimise certain meanings and actions, and it is these practices that we need to challenge. I maintain that the UNSCR 1325 should not normalise war and increase militarisation processes; it should be used to encourage demilitarisation, development of anti-militarist policies of peace and ensure discursive shift from the conventional understanding of militarised and state-cantered security into a feminist conceptualisation of peace.

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## Привласнення фемінізму: гендер, мілітаризм і Резолюція 1325 Ради Безпеки ООН

**Анна Нікогосян**

Резолюцію 1325 Ради Безпеки ООН часто називають історичною. Але, незважаючи на її революційний потенціал, я доводжу, що Резолюцію було створено посередництвом гендерованих дискурсів, що уможливили її використання в мілітаристських цілях. З оперттям на постструктуралістську феміністичну теорію міжнародних відносин, я розглядаю Резолюцію як дискурсивну практику і стверджую: те, як ООН концептуалізує й інтерпретує гендер і безпеку, дає можливість державам використати радикальні наміри резолюції для легітимації та нормалізації мілітаристських практик і для замовчування анти-мілітаристської критики. Щоб оприлюднити це, я вивчаю гендеровані дискурси, що лежать в основі Резолюції, і показую два основні шляхи її мілітаризації (разом з наявними процесами мілітаризації в Республіці Вірменія).

## Присваивание феминизма: гендер, милитаризм и Резолюция 1325 Совета Безопасности ООН

**Анна Никогосян**

Резолюцию 1325 Совета Безопасности ООН часто называют ключевой. Но несмотря на ее революционный потенциал, я утверждаю, что Резолюция была разработана посредством гендерированных дискурсов, почему и стало возможным ее использование в милитаристских целях. Основываясь на постструктуралистской феминистской теории международных отношений, я рассматриваю Резолюцию как дискурсивную практику и утверждаю, что то, как ООН концептуализирует и интерпретирует гендер и безопасность, позволяет государствам использовать радикальный смысл Резолюции для легитимации и нормализации милитаристских практик и для замалчивания антимилитаристской критики. Чтобы показать это, я изучаю гендерированные дискурсы, лежащие в основе Резолюции, и указываю на два основных пути ее милитаризации (включая текущую милитаризацию в Республике Армения).