

Reintroducing women, peace and security

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This special issue of *International Affairs*, launched on International Women's Day 2016, explores the potential and limits of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, a global policy architecture supporting gender equality and today a significant reference point in the management and resolution of, as well as recovery from, violent conflict. The Women, Peace and Security (conventionally abbreviated to WPS) agenda was formally inaugurated by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000. Across 18 operative paragraphs, the Council appealed for the greater participation of women in decision-making in national, regional and international institutions; their further involvement in peacekeeping, field operations, mission consultation and peace negotiations; increased funding and other support for UN bodies' gender work; enhanced state commitments to women's and girls' human rights and their protection under international law; the introduction of special measures against sexual violence in armed conflict; and the consideration of women's and girls' needs in humanitarian, refugee, disarmament and post-conflict settings. The foundational resolution also mandated the secretary-general both to study the impact of war on women and girls and to report back to the Council regularly.¹

Over the ensuing 15 years, these areas of concern have been repackaged several times, sometimes around three 'themes' (participation, protection and the gender perspective), at other times around four 'pillars' (identified variously: some cite prevention, protection, participation and peacekeeping, while others substitute relief and recovery for peacekeeping and yet others recognize a normative dimension).² However expressed, the agenda was demanding, constituting as it did a platform from which it was possible to imagine radical reform of peace and security governance, and it was celebrated as such. For those who had agitated to bring Resolution 1325 into being, WPS was truly transformative in its scope, and its passage through the Council was therefore a 'watershed' moment for the global

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325, Oct. 2000.

² See e.g. Nicola Pratt and Sophie Richter-Devroe, 'Critically examining UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13: 4, 2011, p. 492; Radhika Coomaraswamy et al., *Preventing conflict, transforming peace, securing the peace: a global study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325* (New York: UN Women, 2015), p. 13. See also, for further discussion of scholarship on this topic, Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, 'The futures past of the Women, Peace and Security agenda', *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 373–92 below.

feminist movement (a characterization frequently heard since).³ On the cusp of the twenty-first century, it had been agreed that women's political and economic status was a matter for the most serious consideration, and that addressing chronic gender inequality could indeed lay the foundations for sustainable peace.

Seven subsequent resolutions have since clarified and deepened the WPS programme (see table 1). On the back of Resolution 1325, governments were encouraged to produce national action plans (NAPs) detailing how they would advance gender equality at home and abroad. Various other entities, including NATO and the European Union, have incorporated elements of the WPS agenda into their defence and security policies. The agenda's diffusion has proceeded in parallel with a greater recognition of issues of sexual and gender-based violence in such venues as the International Criminal Court, created in 2002 and itself building on developments at the ad hoc tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, and the special courts for Cambodia, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste.

Yet, as the articles in this collection demonstrate, engagement with the WPS agenda has not been uniform, in theory, concept or practice; there is no consensus either on the desired direction of progress or on which part of the agenda is the most crucial to such progress.⁴ It is, moreover, doubly misleading to identify 2015 as marking 15 years of the WPS agenda: for Resolution 1325 was not a pristine origin point, and the agenda is not about 'women' in isolation. The long history of WPS stretches back at least a century to the Netherlands, specifically to The Hague in the spring of 1915. It was there, nine months into the First World War, that over 1,000 women gathered, drawn exclusively from Europe and the United States, in an attempt to hasten the peace. Their resolutions protested at 'the odious wrongs' suffered by women in times of war, urged the democratic control of foreign policy and the universal enfranchisement of women, and proposed women's participation in negotiations towards 'a constructive peace', to be followed by general disarmament and a 'permanent peace'.⁵ Those among the women present who emerged from the war on the winning side had some impact on the Paris negotiations.⁶ The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) dates its foundation back to this meeting at the Hague.⁷ In 1948, the WILPF was granted consultative status at the UN, and it continues to play an active leadership role in advocacy around, and support for the implementation of, the WPS agenda to this day.

The formal mobilization of the global women's movement proceeded through a number of UN World Conferences on Women, moving from Mexico City to

³ Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, war and peace: the independent experts' assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building* (New York: UNIFEM, 2002). For a problematization of this construction see also Laura J. Shepherd, 'Sex, security and superhero(in)es: from 1325 to 1820 and beyond', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13: 4, 2011, pp. 504–21.

⁴ For more detail, see Kirby and Shepherd, 'The futures past', pp. 373–92 below.

⁵ International Congress of Women, The Hague, 28 April–1 May 1915, 'Resolutions adopted', http://www.ub.gu.se/kvinndata/portaler/fred/samarbete/pdf/resolutions_1915.pdf. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 2 Jan. 2015.)

⁶ Ingrid Sharp, 'Feminist peace activism 1915 and 2010: are we nearly there yet?', *Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research* 38: 2, 2013, p. 161.

⁷ See also Lela B. Costin, 'Feminism, pacifism, internationalism and the 1915 International Congress of Women', *Women's Studies International Forum* 5: 3–4, 1982, pp. 301–15.

Table 1: Key issues and core provisions in the UN Security Council resolutions on ‘Women, Peace and Security’

| <i>Resolution (year)</i> | <i>Key issues and core provisions</i> |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1325 (2000) | Representation and participation of women in peace and security governance; protection of women’s rights and bodies in conflict and post-conflict situations |
| 1820 (2008) | Protection of women from sexualized violence in conflict; zero tolerance of sexualized abuse and exploitation perpetrated by UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations personnel |
| 1888 (2009) | Creation of office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV); creation of UN Action as an umbrella organization addressing issues related to CRSV; identification of ‘team of experts’; appointment of Women’s Protection Advisers (WPAs) to field missions |
| 1889 (2009) | Need to increase participation of women in peace and security governance at all levels; creation of global indicators to map implementation of UNSCR 1325 |
| 1960 (2010) | Development of CRSV monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements; integration of WPAs to field missions alongside Gender Advisers |
| 2106 (2013) | Challenging impunity and lack of accountability for CRSV |
| 2122 (2013) | Identifies UN Women as key UN entity providing information and advice on participation of women in peace and security governance; whole-of-UN accountability; civil society inclusion; 2015 High-level Review of implementation of UNSCR 1325 |
| 2242 (2015) | Integrates Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) in all UNSC country situations; establishes Informal Experts Group on WPS; adds WPS considerations to sanctions committee deliberations; links WPS to countering terrorism and extremism |

Source: Adapted from table 1 in Laura J. Shepherd, ‘Advancing the women, peace and security agenda: 2015 and beyond’, NOREF Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, 28 Aug. 2014, <http://www.peacebuilding.no/Themes/Inclusivity-and-gender/Publications/Advancing-the-Women-Peace-and-Security-agenda-2015-and-beyond>.

Copenhagen, and from Nairobi to Beijing, transforming its geographical basis and political presence as it developed.⁸ It was at Beijing in 1995 that the immediate antecedents of Resolution 1325 were codified. Appealing for the ‘maintenance of international peace and security’, activists posited that peace itself ‘is inextricably

⁸ Martha Alter Chen, ‘Engendering world conferences: the international women’s movement and the United Nations’, *Third World Quarterly* 16: 3, 1995, pp. 477–94.

linked with the advancement of women'.⁹ To increase women's political voice and economic autonomy was thus also to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls. The fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action went on to frame the Security Council's deliberations in 2000.

The advancement and equality of women form the central theme of Resolution 1325 and its descendants. But the terminology of 'women' is contested, and more open to interpretation than the objective of increasing women's numerical participation would suggest. The 'women' in WPS is an umbrella term representing both the diversity of actual women seeking greater voice at multiple sites of political struggle, and also a whole array of gender arrangements which implicate men *and* women. In this second sense WPS refers not to women alone in the context of peace and security, but to *gender*, peace and security. Men feature in WPS frequently as the perpetrators of violence or as potential allies in seeking gender equality; but also, increasingly, as a constituency that is itself at risk in certain situations.¹⁰ Recent resolutions and cognate efforts such as the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) have highlighted men's and boys' experience of sexual and gender-based violence.¹¹ There is an increasing acceptance that the male/female binary is insufficient for mapping out the variety of vulnerabilities that flow from sexuality, ethnic identity and socio-economic class (among other factors) and that are expressed in part through gender identity.¹² Similarly, whether the greater participation of women in peacekeeping increases the operational efficiency of missions depends more on a nuanced consideration of gender dynamics than on achieving an even male–female balance within missions.

Thus, the creation of Resolution 1325 should be viewed not as the origin point for global gender politics but as a marker of its arrival in the highest political forum, with consequences to be debated. And debate there has certainly been. The field of WPS literature is extensive, detailed and crowded.¹³ Yet very little of

⁹ *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action / Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome* (New York: UN Women, 1995, 2015), p. 10, http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf.

¹⁰ We discuss this at greater length in 'The futures past', pp. 373–92 below.

¹¹ See Paul Kirby, 'Ending sexual violence in conflict: the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and its critics', *International Affairs* 91: 3, May 2015, pp. 457–72.

¹² See Jamie J. Hagen, 'Queering women, peace and security', *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 313–32 below.

¹³ It is impossible to do justice to all of the important contributions to the field in one footnote. We find that the following pieces collectively provide a good overview of the history of WPS, engage with the issues that drive debate at the present time, and/or offer interesting provocations to scholars and practitioners working in this field: Carol Cohn, Helen Kinsella and Sheri Gibbings, 'Women, peace and security: Resolution 1325', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6: 1, 2004, pp. 130–40; Sam Cook, 'Security Council Resolution 1820: on militarism, flashlights, raincoats and rooms without doors—a political perspective on where it came from and what it adds', *Emory International Law Review* 23: 1, 2009, pp. 125–39; Fummi Olonisakin, Karen Barnes and Eka Ikpe, *Women, peace and security: translating policy into practice* (London: Routledge, 2011); Dianne Otto, 'Power and danger: feminist engagement with international law through the UN Security Council', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 32, 2010, pp. 97–121; Nicola Pratt and Sophie Richter-Devroe, eds, *Gender, governance and international security* (London: Routledge, 2013); Nadine Puechguirbal, 'Discourses on gender, patriarchy and Resolution 1325: a textual analysis of UN documents', *International Peacekeeping* 17: 2, 2010, pp. 172–87; Laura J. Shepherd, 'Power and authority in the production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325', *International Studies Quarterly* 52: 2, 2008, pp. 383–404; Torunn L. Tryggestad, 'Trick or treat? The UN and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security', *Global Governance* 15: 4, 2009, pp. 539–57; Susan Willett, 'Introduction. Security Council Resolution 1325: assessing the impact on women, peace and security', *International Peacekeeping* 17: 2, 2011, pp. 142–58.

this research and commentary has made it into journals with a policy audience. Where WPS themes have figured, it has tended to be in the discussion of a more conventional set of national security questions.¹⁴ Within the think-tank and NGO community, research has understandably been focused on progress against the major WPS indicators, and on narrowing the distance between New York and the various ‘fields’ in which the agenda has to be implemented.¹⁵

The articles in this special issue of *International Affairs* extend and enrich debates about WPS in innovative ways, reaching beyond implementation. Roberta Guerina and Katharine Wright come closest to the question of implementation, but in the context of investigating the extent to which the EU’s engagement with WPS discourse is evidence of, or a contributory factor in, the construction of the EU as a leader in promoting ‘gender norms’.¹⁶ All but one of the other contributors focus on the gaps and silences in WPS discourse and practice: Fionnuala Ní Aoláin explores the applicability of WPS principles in an era of ‘new wars’ in which much security strategy is focused on counterterrorism;¹⁷ Jamie J. Hagen interrogates the WPS agenda from a queer theory perspective, to explore the heteronormative logics that tend to structure both discourse and practice;¹⁸ and Marjaana Jauhola focuses explicitly on the marginalized subjects of women, peace and security, exploring the ways in which WPS discourse is predicated upon a construct of the ‘good woman’.¹⁹ Soumita Basu, by contrast, analyses the performative dimension of WPS in her exploration of state practice at the UN in relation to WPS.²⁰ Cutting into this issue in a different manner, Sam Cook offers a compelling account of the ways in which WPS is performed by civil society actors at the UN, arguing that by examining this performance we can gain a profound understanding of the dynamics of power, legitimacy and authority that render WPS discourse intelligible, and mobilize support for the agenda into the future.²¹ In the final contribution, we provide an assessment of the past 15 years of WPS, an analysis of its tensions in the present, and a sketch of its possible near futures.²²

¹⁴ Most prominently that of women’s proper role in militaries. See Megan H. MacKenzie, ‘Let women fight: ending the US military’s female combat ban’, *Foreign Affairs* 91: 6, 2012, pp. 32–42. Gender has been a generally neglected topic for this journal. For exceptions see Marysia Zalewski, “‘Well, what is the feminist perspective on Bosnia?’”, *International Affairs* 71: 2, April 1995, pp. 339–56; Gillian Youngs, ‘Feminist International Relations: a contradiction in terms? Or: why women and gender are essential to understanding the world “we” live in’, *International Affairs* 80: 1, Jan. 2004, pp. 75–87 and replies in the same issue; Gillian Youngs, ‘The “new home front” and the war on terror: ethical and political reframing of national and international politics’, *International Affairs* 86: 4, July 2010, pp. 925–37; Andrea Fischer-Tahir, ‘Competition, cooperation and resistance: women in the political field in Iraq’, *International Affairs* 86: 6, Nov. 2010, pp. 1381–94.

¹⁵ The recent High-level Review outcome report on the global study of implementation of UNSCR 1325 is an excellent example. See Coomaraswamy et al., *Preventing conflict*.

¹⁶ ‘Gendering normative power Europe: lessons of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 293–312 below.

¹⁷ ‘The ‘war on terror’ and extremism: assessing the relevance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 275–92 below.

¹⁸ ‘Queering women, peace and security’, pp. 313–32 below.

¹⁹ ‘Decolonizing branded peacebuilding: abjected women talk back to the Finnish Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 333–52 below.

²⁰ ‘Gender as national interest at the UN Security Council’, *International Affairs* 92: 2, 2016, pp. 255–74 below.

²¹ ‘The “woman in conflict” at the UN Security Council: a subject of practice’, *International Affairs* 92: 2, March 2016, pp. 353–72 below.

²² ‘The futures past’, pp. 373–392 below.

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It is our hope that this collection will forge a connection between the best of academic reflection on the agenda (via original research, political analysis and interrogating key terms and assumptions) and the concrete dilemmas of implementation (for participants, practitioners and activists). Fifteen years on from Resolution 1325, and after considerable progress in the recognition of gender issues, we offer our collective assessment of the vagaries of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the better to understand the coming fortunes of the 'the gender perspective' on war and peace.