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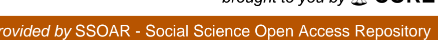

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Masculinities in Peacekeeping: Limits and transformations of UNSCR 1325 in the South African National Defence Force

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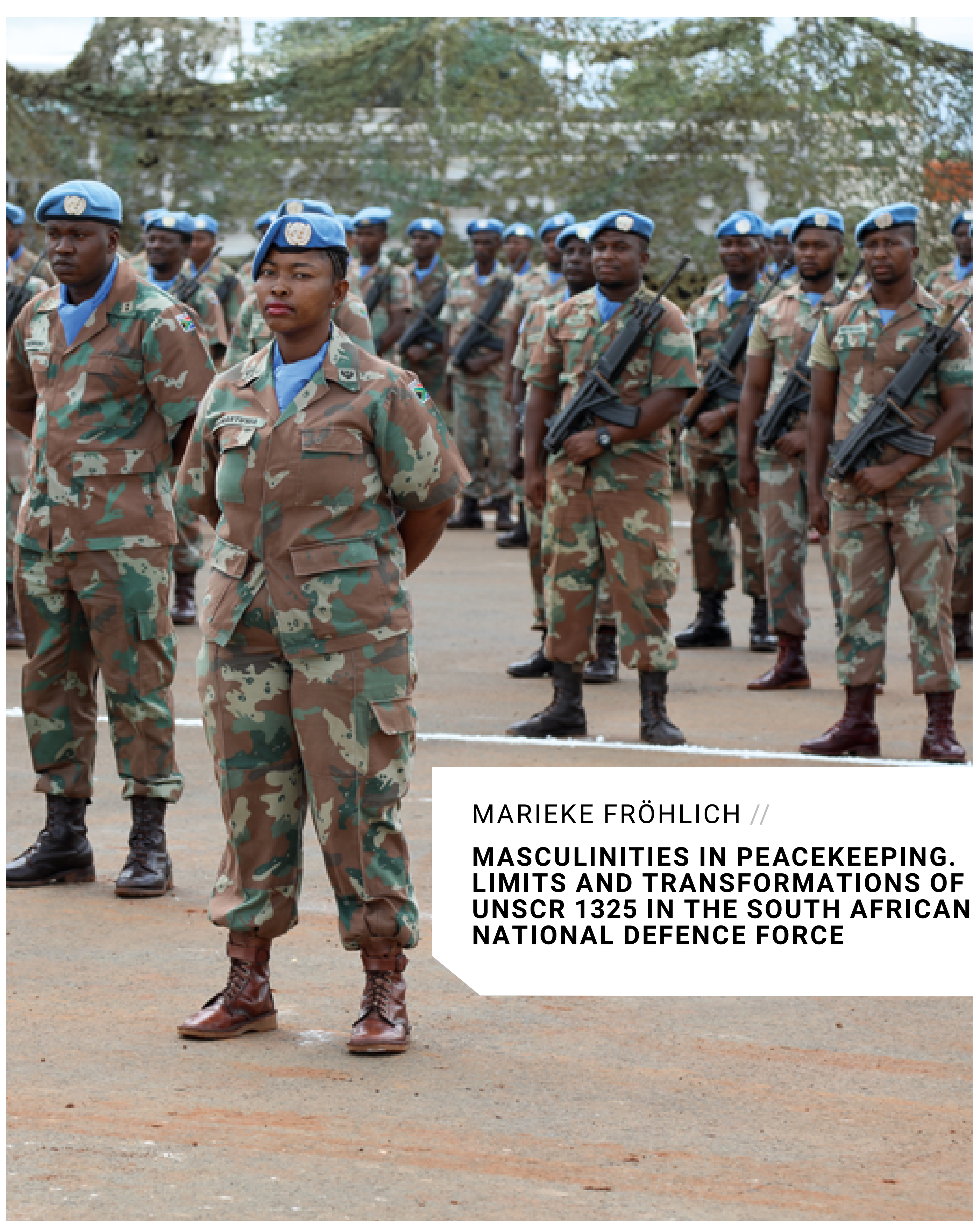

MARIEKE FRÖHLICH //

MASCULINITIES IN PEACEKEEPING. LIMITS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF UNSCR 1325 IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

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MASCULINITIES IN PEACEKEEPING

LIMITS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF UNSCR 1325 IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

MARIEKE FRÖHLICH //

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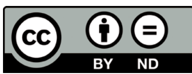

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The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) has dominated the international Women, Peace and Security (WPS) debate since its unanimous adoption in 2000. Despite its inherent flaws and widespread criticism, the resolution remains a crucial tool in feminist lobbying for gender-sensitive peacekeeping. While South Africa is one of the countries with the highest proportion of female peacekeepers deployed, highlighting its supposed success in implementing the mandate of UNSCR 1325, questions remain about implications beyond the "numbers game." This research report aims to fill this gap by investigating the ways that UNSCR 1325 has been conceptualized and put into practice in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). I examine the organizational and individual level of conceptualization and implementation through in-depth interviews with members of the force, and pay specific attention to the unique case of South Africa both historically and in the present day. Considering South Africa's accomplishment in sending female peacekeepers on missions, this project was approached affirmatively, while keeping in mind postcolonial critiques of peacekeeping. I discuss how the shortcomings of UNSCR 1325, specifically related to gender essentialisms, have affected discourses within SANDF, leading to contradictions and contestations concerning sameness and difference among male and female peacekeepers. This specifically relates to the contradictions between South Africa's national transformation discourse, based on human rights, and WPS discourses, which are based on gender essentialisms. Gender essentialisms are counterproductive for gender equality and gender-just peace, as they work to reify and reproduce unequal gender relations as natural and unchangeable.

Unequal gender relations are central barriers to genuine and lasting peace and security as well as incompatible with universal human rights. With South Africa's political project of asserting itself as a continental leader, interesting (neo)colonial tendencies came to light in the interviews, posing questions concerning the impacts of the WPS framework in peacekeeping engagements. Nevertheless, despite reiteration and reifying of problematic gender essentialisms, I found tendencies of SANDF members within the organization's gender structures revealing in-depth critical engagement with military peacekeeper masculinities, pointing towards a surpassing of the limited premise of UNSCR 1325. Locating these findings within the emerging literature on masculinities in WPS, using Duncanson's (2013) notion of transformative peacekeeper masculinities and the concept of a regendered military (Duncanson/Woodward 2016), this paper outlines transformational possibilities for changing peacekeeper masculinities in the South African National Defence Force. In order to pinpoint the transformative power of these changes, a research agenda and actions are proposed to ultimately support and inform transformation of the ways that militaries and the UN conceptualize and enact peacekeeping towards feminist peace.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ground-breaking United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is about to turn 20. Now boasting a total of 10 resolutions altogether, the WPS agenda has become a broad field of advocacy, policy and scholarship. While peacekeeping has been undergoing crucial changes since the end of the Cold War, it was only in 2000 that the gendered character of conflict and peacekeeping was officially acknowledged by international institutions through the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). The resolution was the first policy framework at the UN level to acknowledge the differing impacts of war and armed conflict on men and women, to highlight the specifically gendered nature of conflict and to draw attention to the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict. UNSCR 1325 has since been hailed as a "watershed" in international relations and for women's rights and their protection during and after armed conflict (Anderlini 2007; Miller et al 2014). With 10 resolutions now falling under the UNSCR 1325 umbrella, the framework has evolved over the past two decades to become the central pillar of feminist work on peace, security and conflict.

Despite its evolution, many activists and scholars have highlighted fundamental problems within the resolution and the broader discourses that have emerged around WPS (see for instance Simić 2014; Charlesworth 2008; Puechguirbal 2010; Onyejekwe 2005; Higate/Henry 2004). The lack of implementation and inadequate accountability mechanisms have limited the effects of the agenda. In addition, problems of conceptualization are central to the criticisms, highlighting problematic gender essentialisms reiterated and reproduced through the UNSCR 1325 framework. Gender essentialisms are counterproductive for gender equality and gender-just peace, as they work to reify and reproduce unequal gender relations as natural and unchangeable. Unequal gender relations are central barriers to genuine and lasting peace and security as well as being incompatible with universal human rights (Duncanson 2013; Sjoberg 2010; Tickner 1992). Despite the criticisms, UNSCR 1325 remains one of the main tools for advocating for gender equality in the context of peace and security, including in international peacekeeping missions.

Women's equal participation in peacekeeping was outlined in resolution UNSCR 2122 (2013) and has received much attention from academics and policymakers. Contingents of national militaries make up military peacekeeping missions. Thus, the makeup of national armed forces is the basis of women's participation in peacekeeping. Although there is a great deal of research on gender and the military, specifically regarding women within military forces in Western[1] contexts, there is a lack of research on women soldiers within (state) military organizations in African contexts (Baaz and Stern 2013). Moreover, we know little about the ways that UNSCR 1325 has affected militaries and those people in such organizations who are engaged in peacekeeping. Even less is known about the ways

1 I acknowledge that using terms such as "the West" or "the South" are problematic and need to be treated with some circumspection, as they often seem to simply replace terminologies meaning the "First World" or the "Third World." Nevertheless, these terms are being used within the broader debates on peace and security as well as in international politics and by my participants; they are useful for demarcating broader global power relations and rough cultural areas. For discussions of the potential problems with such terminology from postcolonial perspectives, see Lazarus (2004).

that soldiers who have been trained on gender issues experience peacekeeping. Attempting to answer these questions in the South African context is especially interesting, since the defense force, as all other state institutions, has been undergoing transformation as part of the transition from racist minority rule to popular democracy. Partly as a result of this process, South Africa is now a leader in driving gender balance in its armed forces and boasts one of the highest proportions of female military personnel it sends to UN peace missions. One of the few “success stories” in implementing UNSCR 1325 with regard to peacekeeping, the country has been hailed as a role model. This is specifically significant, as South Africa is a top contributing country to peace missions and has invested in its peacekeeping commitment as a foreign policy tool.

Nevertheless, while living, studying and working in South Africa over a period of several years, I became aware of the intense contestation of gender equality, specifically as part of the broader national project of transformation after apartheid. While South Africa has one of the most just constitutions on the planet, women’s rights and security is an everyday struggle for women and girls. Given the contestation and contradictions within the country, I wanted to find out what is behind the numerical “success story” of South Africa’s peace mission deployments and investigate what the more subtle gendered politics in South Africa’s peacekeeping looked like. After all, the mere numbers game of women’s inclusion does not tell us anything about power relations in the context at hand (Hudson 2016). Moreover, being critical of the UNSCR 1325 framework and related UN women’s equality discourses because of their essentialist notions of peaceful womanhood, I was curious what the resolution meant for South Africa’s peacekeeping efforts: How do members of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) understand and make sense of UNSCR 1325 within the context of South Africa? How important was the resolution for the implementation of gender policies in SANDF and what are SANDF members’ experiences with and views on women peacekeepers in SANDF and its deployments? Finally, how do these perceptions and experiences relate to broader discourses in the WPS discussions?

This report is based on findings obtained in two months of fieldwork in South Africa, including expert interviews, desk review and in-depth interviews with 13 members of the South African National Defence Force. It investigates the ways that UNSCR 1325, with all its problems, has been conceptualized and put into practice by members of SANDF. I will show how some of the inherent and problematic contradictions of the UNSCR 1325 agenda are present in the discourse among people who are interviewed and how this affects the ways women’s participation in peacekeeping is made sense of by soldiers. Moreover, I will draw initial conclusions from the findings and outline avenues of further research and propose measures for the future, focusing specifically on the potential of transformative peacekeeper masculinities for positive peace and security.

2. UNSCR 1325: WOMEN AS A GIFT TO PEACEKEEPING?

UNSCR 1325 is a result of the persistent, strategic work and pressure by a large network of women’s groups on the UN body and is a product of intensive consultation with NGOs and the UN NGO Working Group (Barnes 2011; Miller et al 2014). The resolution acknowledges that women and girls bear

the brunt of much armed conflict and emphasizes the necessity to prevent and prosecute sexualized and gender-based violence against civilians and the urgency with which the specific needs of women and girls in conflict contexts need to be considered. Importantly, UNSCR 1325 for the first time urges member states to increase women's representation in national, regional and international institutions and stresses the importance of women's equal participation in peacekeeping at all levels. The resolution and subsequent follow-ups created an entire normative and institutional framework on gender in peacekeeping that did not exist prior to 2000 (Coomaraswamy et al 2015).

A range of follow-up resolutions have been adopted since UNSCR 1325 (2000), all reiterating its primary aims, but with different emphases. As these follow-up resolutions only occasionally add to the initial outline of action and intentions of the first resolution, UNSCR 1325 has remained an umbrella term, the main tool and guiding resolution for both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as researchers, politicians and activists. Resolution 2122 (2013) deserves special mention, as it "encourages" contributing countries to increase the number of women among their troops and police officers and to ensure gender training for all deployed individuals. In the following, UNSCR 1325 will also be used as an umbrella term.

2.1 PROBLEMS WITH THE UNSCR 1325 FRAMEWORK

Despite the "watershed" nature of UNSCR 1325, many authors have drawn attention to a range of problems regarding implementation and inherent shortcomings of the resolution and its follow-ups. As part of the run-up to the fifteenth anniversary of the resolution, a "Global Study on Implementation of UNSCR 1325" (Coomaraswamy et al 2015) was commissioned, assessing the implementation of the WPS agenda. While the global study makes clear that there has been great change and development in terms of normative frameworks with regard to WPS, its main message argues what has been highlighted for years: there is much talk and goodwill and many promises, but these do not translate into meaningful action and implementation. Reasons for this are primarily a lack of political will, financing and accountability, as well as the resistance of institutions and attitudinal barriers to gender-just transformations (Coomaraswamy et al 2015). For instance, although UNSCR 1325 aimed at addressing different issues within peacekeeping as conducted by the UN, it did so mostly by calling on member states to make changes and made few commitments itself. Importantly, the UN did not develop any mechanisms for ensuring the actual implementation of the resolution by member states. This is a parallel to peacekeeping, as member states are responsible for preparation, training and disciplining of peacekeepers. What is more, specific institutional barriers have caused problems, given that the UN and many of its sub-organizations have been extremely resistant to change in terms of gender transformation. Moreover, national institutions, which are central for putting national policies, action plans or resolutions into action, have shown little openness to transformation. Here, military organizations in particular are resistant to change (Woodward/Duncanson 2017).

Consequently, UNSCR 1325 has generally had unsatisfactory effects in terms of altering peacekeeping. There has been little advancement in participation of women in peacekeeping efforts; only 3.5% of military peacekeepers in UN missions were women in 2014 (Fröhlich et al 2014). The impunity

of peacekeepers who have committed horrendous acts against local populations has not changed much, with inadequate attention paid to tackling sexualized violence perpetrated by members of peacekeeping missions. Hardly any peacekeepers are held accountable for these crimes (Dharmapuri 2011; Jansson 2013; Onyejekwe 2005; Willett 2010). There has also been little change in the training and preparation of peacekeepers for their missions, with no direct increase in the budget for peacekeeping training and little support from the United Nations to its member states to foster the implementation of gender-specific training, as called for by UNSCR 1325 (Dharmapuri 2011).

Despite an increase in the language of *meaningful* participation that has now been incorporated into UNSC debates, the primary focus remains on a numerical increase in the participation of women in security contexts (Davies/True 2018). Specifically in peacekeeping, this leads to reifications of uncritical notions of gender essentialisms (Kirby/Shepherd 2016). These confine men and women to stereotypical gender roles and deny the possibility of action outside these. The gender essentialisms primarily used and reproduced in the context of peacekeeping involve the trope of women's inherent peacefulness and cooperative nature and, conversely, men's violent and warrior-like nature focused on domination and power. Through producing these gender differences as natural and unchangeable, gender essentialisms reify unequal, gendered power relations (Smith 2001). This reification is problematic, most importantly here because it prevents meaningful inclusive peace. The unequal power relations discriminate against women and people who do not fit conservative notions of gender and sexuality, effectively positioning them in locations of oppression and insecurity. Sexual- and gender-based violence as the tip of manifestations of gendered power imbalances has been an almost normalized occurrence in the context of conflict, war and peacekeeping (Karim/Beardsley 2017). Gender essentialisms are thus harmful to any kind of political agenda aimed at gender justice and increasing women's representation and rights.

The idea of women as naturally and inherently peaceful is central to the logic of the UNSCR 1325 framework (Duncanson 2016). Effectively, this results in notions of women adding specifically feminine qualities to peacekeeping missions, a discourse very prominent within the WPS context. This includes the argument that woman soldiers engage more easily and more frequently with local communities, are more empathetic and emotionally tuned, more approachable, especially for local women, and engage in community development. It has also been argued that female soldiers help foster a change in the behavior of and counter abuse by male colleagues, thus preventing SGBV or exploitation of local residents by peacekeepers. Importantly, these "added values" that female peacekeepers supposedly bring to peace missions are based on essentialist notions of femininity and relate directly to women's allegedly inherent nature. It is important to investigate whether female peacekeepers actually do bring the characteristics mentioned to missions or not, and work on this issue has been done elsewhere.[2] However, it is equally important to evaluate the discursive and political work which these arguments are doing.

2 See for instance Heinecken (2013b), Heinecken (2015) and Alchin et al (2018) taking into account the broader gender debates surrounding women's contributions to peacekeeping, and by considering the experiences of women in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), who investigate this question in the context of South Africa. All three studies found that the masculinist environment in the SANDF and peacekeeping contexts as well as inadequate

Gender essentialisms are intimately connected to patriarchal sociopolitical structures, which are based on the naturalization of gender characteristics and their hierarchies. Gender essentialisms work to produce gender binaries and roles as fixed and given instead of showing that gender is always in-the-making (Butler 1990; El-Bushra 2007). Social practices negotiate gender identities and their meanings, for which there is no room within essentialized constructions of gender, as within UNSCR 1325 (El-Bushra 2007). This happens through the reproduction of conservative assumptions about what a "woman" is and thus how she behaves (in conflict situations) as well as by not pointing out that "man" is also a gendered identity that needs to be problematized (Carpenter 2006). Binary gender difference is taken for granted in the resolution. Its contextualization within the field of WPS, and especially in peacekeeping, serves as a homogenizing and universalizing act, in which women are understood as a unitary, homogeneous group of Others. There appears to be no need for differentiation by class, age, religion, political affiliation or cultural location, but only in terms of gender/sex.

A related problem is the conflation of "gender" with "women", a common and oft-criticized pitfall in much gender/women legislation.[3] This works to recenter the center, to position men and boys as the norm, i.e. as if they were ungendered, while women and girls can never escape their difference from the purported "mainstream," due to their genderedness (Kronsell 2012; Sjoberg 2014). This mechanism also discursively produces a conceptualization of women as a special interest group, which further reinforces the already special status of women in the context of military peacekeeping or the military generally. The mainstreaming of gender perspectives then appears unnecessary; the implication is that we are, after all, dealing with a minority that does not belong "here" (in peacekeeping) anyway.

This train of thought also leads to the assumption that women can naturally deal better with women and gender issues. This is not the case since women, too, have to be trained how to respond to SGBV, for instance. Female peacekeepers might also not even be interested in this work, especially since women and gender-related work are marginalized in most organizations, specifically militaries (Mobekk 2010). Militaries have been "defined, conceptualized and structured in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity" (Britton 2000, 419). This juxtaposes essentialist notions of manhood and masculinity with femininity and at the same time produces normative notions of masculinity and femininity which are central to the ways military forces work and military identities are produced (Britton 2000; Carreiras 2010).

Furthermore, UNSCR 1325 always mentions women in connection with children, simultaneously assuming that women are the exclusive caretakers while often also presenting women as equal to children (or girls), at least in contexts of need for protection and civilian status (Otto 2009; Puechguirbal 2010; Sivakumaran 2007). It is thus assumed that women-and-children affected by conflict are necessarily civilians, ignoring the fact that many women are actively engaged in armed conflicts and that many men are not involved in fighting. This discursively produces all (local) men as potential

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training prevented female soldiers from having a specifically "feminine influence" on the force or its peacekeeping ventures.

3 See, for example, Charlesworth (2008).

aggressors, while all women-and-children are considered without agency. In addition, the attempt to highlight the specific ways that women are affected by armed conflict, for instance through the heavy focus on SGBV, has had the unfortunate effect of producing women primarily as victims (Davies/True 2018, 7).[4] This positions them as essentially weak and vulnerable, and, crucially, in need of protection by "good" men, thus negating women's agency.

The idea of women's inherent peacefulness and thus their added value to peacekeeping could be understood as an affirmative essentialism, in the sense of Fox (1996) and Helms (2003). They argue that gender essentialisms can work to turn the initial intention of essentialisms inside out: the same qualities that are seen as making women inadequate as soldiers, such as empathy, ability to cooperate and peace affinity, are exactly those that the argument for increased numbers of women in peace missions is now based on. Yet, this essentialist understanding limits women's contribution to the non-fighting arena, directly contradicting the resolution, as the involvement of women in all areas of peacekeeping is called for. Hence, women are not conceived as "useful" as soldiers; it is only their specific femaleness that justifies their participation in peace missions (Heinecken 2013a; Simić 2014).

Because civil society actors still use UNSCR 1325 as a tool for rallying for gender perspectives and women's rights in (post)-conflict contexts, we are now in a contradictory entanglement where patriarchal and conservative notions of gender are used to justify women's rights and gender transformation. The resolution has had rather discouraging results on the broader discourse in the Women, Peace and Security literature and practice. For instance, Charlesworth (2008) notes how the idea of the inherent peacefulness of women is becoming an "orthodoxy" in international institutions. Similarly, Heinecken (2013a) argues that the increasing importance of UNSCR 1325 in discourses on peacekeeping has led to women's inclusion in peacekeeping no longer being driven by a human rights approach but based on their "added value". This is, as I will show, especially damaging in the South African context as the post-apartheid discourse on equal human rights appears to be co-opted by discourses concerning women's specific additions to peacekeeping.

These critical analyses of the discursive gender constructions inherent in UNSCR 1325 and much of its implementation have led to a dilemma for feminists, as this critique does not directly lead to plans for action but remains in the theoretical realm (Duncanson 2016). Against the background of this dilemma, the present research set out to connect the critique of the resolution's gender conceptualization and discursive gender productions of the resolution with the ways it is locally and practically implemented. Before turning to the empirical part of this paper, it is important to outline feminist approaches to peace and security in order to contextualize the study.

3. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE AND SECURITY

4 While it remains essential to address SGBV in conflict contexts, this narrative is often more prominent than other, more enabling, aspects, such as recognizing the huge role played by women in peacebuilding at the local level.

Feminist approaches to peace and security, which were central to the advocacy underlying UNSCR 1325 are part of a larger shift from state-centric security to a human security approach in the post-Cold War era. The understanding of security has shifted from a focus on securing states, based on the protection of borders and national territory through military power, to “the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who [seek] security in their daily lives” (Hampson 2013; Hudson 2010; UNDP in Paris 2001, 89). A feminist human security approach goes further; it “highlights the dangers of masking differences under the rubric of the term ‘human’” and the inherently gendered nature of security (Hudson 2005, 157). This means that the structural dimensions of security are highlighted, and attention is paid to women’s voices and specific gendered insecurities, such as sexism and sexualized gender-based violence (SGBV) (McKay 2004). Hence, for feminists, a human security paradigm needs to include gender equality as a crucial aim, highlighting the need for specific international policies to this end. These criticisms have resonated with the way peacekeeping is practiced and have led to gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive peacekeeping approaches. UNSCR 1325 is the corner piece of these developments.

These perspectives are influenced by a post-structural feminist perspective on international security and military peacekeeping, allowing us to imagine a different (gendered) regime of international security while being attentive to the problems and shortcomings of current strategies and politics. In this view, it is crucial to link individual experiences in a specific location, in my study South African peacekeepers’ and military members’ experiences, to the broader regional and global processes and structures, i.e. the international gender mainstreaming regime in peacekeeping, within which they are produced and negotiated (Hudson 2005).

When assessing the conceptualization and implementation, the “life” an international policy framework takes on in different contexts, the multiplicity of lived experiences is especially important. Studying the “life” of UNSCR 1325 in the South African context necessitates a theoretical frame that takes the specific political, sociocultural and historical realities seriously. Hence, an African feminist perspective is crucial for a contextualized and politically meaningful human security paradigm for the (South) African context. The notion of womanism plays a crucial role here. Womanism is inclusionary and hence a more conciliatory approach to gender equality than most Western feminisms (Hudson 2005; Kolawole 2004). It emphasizes the importance of working together with men to break down structural inequalities and injustices, which was important to many of my participants (Kolawole 2002). This shows the importance of incorporating masculinities research into the study of WPS, especially in the African context, and also highlights why South Africa is a particularly fruitful place to study this.

The African feminist perspective of womanism necessitates a postcolonial approach; on the one hand due to South Africa’s own colonial and apartheid history, but also due to its engagements within African peacekeeping. Here, South Africa takes on an interesting position on the continent, as it is part of the “developing” and “postcolonial” world, while working to secure its regional hegemony through new means, especially peacekeeping and diplomacy (Solomon 2010). Feminist postcolonial analyses of peacekeeping allow us to make the naturalized and normalized discourse of liberal peace

and its representations of gender visible. In this way, it makes discursive and symbolic power visible within the broader normative discourses on gender and security.

The Women, Peace and Security discourse has been structured by similar assumptions about development and broader international women's rights discourses which position women and men as inherently different, and equate gender with women, instead of engaging with gender as a relational analytical concept for interrogating the structural workings of power. Such a relational gender approach would mean to "acknowledge the role of people of all genders in (de)constructing masculinities and femininities" (Wright 2019, 3). Hudson (2012, 444) points out that "[g]endered power relations are shaped and reproduced through the discourses and practices of peacebuilding actors such as the UN and key Western powers." This means that the gendered power relations and conceptualizations of the UN and UNSCR 1325 have direct effects on the ways that gender discourses in peacekeeping contexts are shaped.

Hence, in my study of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 I follow feminist security theory with a postcolonial and African feminist turn, working against gender essentialisms, while highlighting the reproduction of patriarchal and imperial structures. At the same time, however, I am attentive to possibilities and realities for change in the gendered and gendering structures and practices of militaries and their engagement in aiming to provide security.

3.1 GENDER(-)IN(G) MILITARY PEACEKEEPING

When South Africa started engaging in UN peace missions at the end of the 1990s, peacekeeping was in a process of crucial change resulting from the end of the Cold War, with operations vastly increasing in size and number and addressing the changing nature of conflict (Duffey 1998; Kaldor 1999; Whitworth 2004). Peacekeeping has become "perhaps the major instrument of diplomacy available to the United Nations for insuring peace and international security" and added to increasing militarization (Rubinstein in Whitworth 2005, 3).

Peacekeeping is conducted by contingents of national militaries. Thus, to understand peacekeeping necessitates looking more closely at the ways that militaries are gendered and gendering. Though variation exists, depending on the specific historical and national context regarding its degree, gendering is foundational to all militaries (Woodward/Duncanson 2017). More specifically, due to their structures and cultures (state) militaries are masculinist institutions, and hence value hegemonic male qualities over female ones (Sion 2008; Woodward/Duncanson 2017). The military, as an institution that has been dominated by men, silences gender and sexuality (Kronsell 2012). This silence, according to Kronsell (2012), relates specifically to men, their gender and supposed heterosexuality and thus effectively positions masculinity and heterosexuality as the norm.

Feminist scholars have discussed the gendered hierarchies of armed forces based on militarized masculinities and extreme patriarchal structures.[5] Militarized masculinities are the epitome of nationalist manhood in many contexts – tough, fearless and violent (Whitworth 2004). This is based on the construction of femininity as essentially weak, emotional and incapable of violence, excluding women from military service and hence full citizenship (Tickner 1992). On the other hand, the masculinist nature of militaries contributes to the creation of institutional sexism, racism and homophobia, as they exclude women and men who do not fit the homogenized notion of militarized masculinity. Although women and minority men are now allowed in some armed forces, such as in South Africa, the institutional culture of compulsory masculinization often persists, creating hostile and dangerous environments for those not fitting the hypermasculine norm.

Even within the military as an institution so completely built on the ideal of military masculinity, diverse, dynamic and contradictory forms of masculinities (and femininities) exist. Gender is not a given static fact or character type, but always a process in which gender identities and relations are constructed and performed in relation to bodies, structures, norms and changing contexts (Duncanson 2009). In this vein, Carreiras (2010) highlights the importance of recognizing change and variation, even in such strictly gendered and gendering institutions as the military. The end of the Cold War and the changing nature of conflict as well as, in the South African context, the end of a racist, sexist and militarized minority rule have clearly affected changes in militaries and SANDF specifically. Consequently, I agree with Chisholm and Tidy (2017, 99), who argue: "Taking the disruptions, the asides, and the silences seriously, we claim, challenges the common wisdoms of military masculinities, gender, and war in productive and necessary ways."

The adaption of militaries to peacekeeping engagements has arguably produced such change and at times even disruptions to primary ideas of masculinist warrior soldiers. This is because initially, peacekeepers were soldiers without guns and thus lacked the characteristics of a warrior, leading scholars to argue that peacekeeping "feminizes" soldiering (Whitworth 2004; Sion 2008). However, the role of the peacekeeper has expanded to the extent that it appears rather unclear as to what the role and responsibility of the soldier peacekeeper is (MacKay 2003). The passive, more "feminized" type of peacekeeper may still apply to a certain extent. Yet, the increased use of force, at times even offensively, has clearly brought the traditional warrior type soldier back – and with it militarized masculinity understood as based on strength, toughness and compulsory heterosexuality (Duncanson 2009). These conditions produce at times contradictory expectations and "fuzzy" roles for peacekeepers (Battistelli et al 1999). While they are expected to *diffuse* conflict and aggression, to *mediate* and protect and *support* civilians in their everyday lives, peacekeepers are also supposed to remain warrior soldiers with militarized masculinities as the hegemonic norm in most militaries (Duncanson 2009).

It appears that women military peacekeepers are now used as tools to resolve these mismatches and confusions by arguing their presence somehow naturally decreases negative effects of militarized and aggressive masculinity (Simić 2010). UNSCR 1325 plays a major part in this argument, as

5 See for instance Sjoberg/Via (2010a), Whitworth (2004), (Enloe 1998; 2000) or Carreiras (2010).

it directly links women peacekeepers to feminized tasks in peacekeeping. It seems that women are the social worker-peacekeepers of peace missions. This trope refers to the increased social responsibility in mission tasks for engaging with local communities and supporting women and children in conflict contexts. This part is often especially attributed to female peacekeepers.[6]

"Multidimensional" peacekeeping missions as the main site of deployment for many state militaries together with the "gender mainstreaming" regime of states and the United Nations further highlight the importance of being sensitive to change in the gendered and gendering nature of armed forces. And yet, a postcolonial feminist perspective reminds us of the importance of recognizing perpetuations and reinventions of historical structures of exploitation. I will highlight both dimensions below through the analysis of my research on gender in SANDF.

3.2 UNSCR 1325 IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

SANDF, as the national military of the country, underwent a complete overhaul as part of the general transformation of the South African state after the transition to democracy in the 1990s. The specific history and transition of South Africa from a repressive minority regime to a democracy has been primarily answered with the "rainbow nation" ideology that purports "strength in diversity." The very construction of the rainbow nation has contributed to South Africa seeing itself as a regional leader. It has framed its foreign policy to include a contribution to regional peace and has been one of the major drivers for contributing to peacekeeping missions in Africa.

Gender equality has been enshrined within the constitution of the "New South Africa" as a response to a long history of the women's struggle. Women were comparatively active within the national military and armed struggle movements during the apartheid era. In effect, the "new" South African constitution includes equality and non-discrimination as central pillars and an elaborate "gender machinery" was created. This includes the Commission for Gender Equality, the Ministry for Women, Children and the Disabled, the Office of the Status of Women, and mainstreamed gender in governments' departments, such as in defense. This has impacted on the transformation of the country's security sector, especially of the defense force.

SANDF was to be representative of the country's population, which, in addition to a racially proportional makeup, also included adequate representation of women in the force. Thus, gender transformation first and foremost meant the numerical representation of women. Nevertheless, according to the SANDF mainstreaming policy of 2008, gender transformation also relates to creating "substantive equality [which] includes prohibition of unfair discrimination based on gender, sex, marital status, and pregnancy [and] includes the adoption of positive measures to advance women as a historically disadvantaged group" (SANDF mainstreaming policy 2008, p. 3). Affirmative action and fast tracking

6 It has also been argued that the presence of female peacekeepers in peacekeeping missions keeps male soldiers in check and thus prevents them from engaging in sexual relations or prostitution with local civilians, or even sexually abusing locals (Karim/Beardsley 2013; Simić 2010).

have been put into place to contribute to the creation of a more representative force, both for political and legitimacy reasons. Yet, in order to reach “substantive equality,” the basic institution of SANDF needs to change, given that it is based on gendered and gendering structures and practices. Consequently, I describe gender transformation in South Africa and SANDF as the overcoming of (previous) inequalities based on gender, sex and sexuality through the redistribution of symbolic, social and institutional power.

While racial transformation was pushed rather vigorously and with good success; gender balancing has to date been less successful. SANDF counted 20% women in the integrated force in 1994, 19% women in 1998, 21% in 2003 and 24% in 2017[7] (Heinecken 2017; Le Roux 2005) found that today women are widely accepted within the SANDF, though primarily based on their supposedly “added qualities” to the force and its peacekeeping engagements.

Given the country’s history of malevolent regional hegemony during apartheid, South Africa has succeeded in positioning itself anew as a regional power through benevolent engagements to boost peace and development on the continent. African countries and the world expected South Africa to become the powerhouse of the continent, as Solomon (2010, 132) argues in his analysis: “[e]xpectations were that [South Africa] would become a source of human security for Africa’s long-suffering masses.” The foreign policy objective has been to work for a “better South Africa, a better Africa and a better World” (The Department of International Relations and Cooperation 2012). Peacekeeping deployments have come to constitute a crucial pillar of this policy.

Since 1999 South Africa has contributed military, civilian and police personnel to 14 UN, AU and SADC peace missions. Since then, SANDF soldiers have been deployed to UN missions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Ethiopian/Eritrean border and Sudan, to name a few. Today, SANDF personnel is deployed in the DRC (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS) and Darfur in Sudan (UNAMID). South Africa is the world’s 16th largest contributor to UN peace missions, currently deploying 1,116 military personnel (United Nations Peacekeeping 2019b). In addition to its high level of military contributions to peace missions, South Africa is also a leader regarding “gender balance” within its military deployments, sending comparatively large numbers of women (Fröhlich et al 2014). Between 2009 and 2014, South Africa’s female soldiers and military experts made up 14% of its overall deployment, while the worldwide average was a mere 3.5% (Fröhlich et al 2014; DOD 2015 in Heinecken 2017). Regionally South Africa has also stood as a prime example for gender-focused policies, specifically relating to peace and security.

Although SANDF is one of the top contributors of women to peace missions, the proportion of women who go on deployment (14%) is substantially lower than their proportion of the force (Heinecken 2017). According to the Department of Defense, 25% of uniformed personnel in SANDF are women and 19% in its combat units (DOD 2015 in Heinecken 2017). Deployments to peace missions are on a voluntary basis, but are beneficial to military careers, since “practical experience” is usually required to rise through the ranks. However, social conditions such as bearing the main burden of family care

7 Chief Directorate of Transformation Management 2015: Personal Communication.

often keep women from volunteering for peace missions (Memela-Motumi 2014; Mohale 2013) and consequently also hamper their careers. In addition, despite SANDF's commitment to gender equality and its initial achievements in this area, equality policies are not always followed appropriately. Still, SANDF has implemented institutional mechanisms aimed at gender equality within its structures and also works with gender perspectives in its trainings; something that is not easy in the traditional environments of military institutions (Hendricks 2012).

3.3 SANDF MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES ON UNSCR 1325

The explorative study is based on two months of fieldwork in South Africa. I conducted expert interviews with members of civil society organizations, researchers and practitioners in think tanks and training institutes, as well as semi-structured in-depth interviews with 13 active members of SANDF. Due to the difficulty of accessing the military and time constraints, the sample had to be kept small but it was mixed: my interlocutors represented a variation in terms of experience, age, area of work, etc. I was able to speak to members who are involved in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 through the Peace Mission Training Centre (PMTC), while also interviewing individuals who had experience "in the field", living the ways that UNSCR 1325 had been practiced during deployments. Eight interviewees identified as women and five as men.[8] Despite this heterogeneity, their discourses on women in peacekeeping missions were primarily framed in very similar ways. This may be related to the fact that most (10) worked in one way or another with the "gender structures" of the force,[9] with half (7) having been deployed to at least one peacekeeping mission. Nevertheless, it is a striking finding. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed inductively.

The following set of findings draws on my participants' understandings and opinions of as well as experience of UNSCR 1325 and SANDF's related broader mandate for transformation. The participants' accounts are at times contradictory. For instance, they may whole-heartedly support the national equality discourse and apply it through degendering discourses in their narratives and opinions on women in peacekeeping, arguing that women and men can perform equally well as peacekeepers. However, the same participants may also adopt an essentialist discourses of female peacekeepers, highlighting that their specific contribution to peacekeeping was mainly based on women's roles as mothers. Moreover, the image of SANDF female peacekeeper was used as a vehicle for (re)producing imperial discourses, emphasizing the implications of South Africa's exceptionalism in an African and global arena.

8 Similar to Edwards' recommendation (DeVault/Gross 2007, 181), in most interviews I directly addressed my positionality as a white German researcher who had lived in South Africa for years. This served on the one hand to create a common ground, given that I was indicating I knew South Africa well, but also excluded me from the racial and historical tensions endemic in South African social contexts. My simultaneous outsider/insider status places me on middle ground, which seemed to make it easy for some white and black participants to speak about racial tensions and specificities.

9 I use the term "gender structure" in order to protect the anonymity of my participants while still indicating their relative positions within the institution. In this sense, the gender structures of SANDF include different departments that apply a gender perspective in their work in training, policy making, research, advocacy and public relations.

After presenting these results in more detail, I will draw attention to tendencies in my participants' accounts that highlight their in-depth engagements and understanding of gendered injustice and oppression and show the transformative potential within this military institution.

3.3.1 UNSCR 1325 INFLUENCE ON SANDF

According to my interviewees, UNSCR 1325 has had an important impact on SANDF and its members. Amidst the national transformation project that has affected SANDF, participants highlighted that UNSCR 1325 had a central impact on the way that gender transformation was understood and practiced in SANDF. This influence was especially strong regarding legitimizing and furthering gender-focused policies and measures in the force. UNSCR 1325 was used by members in SANDF as a tool to promote increased gender awareness, training and the inclusion of women in deployments and the military generally. This has been quite successful, at least regarding the number of women in the military and its peace missions, the policies available and the specific gender training mentioned earlier. Officer Kumalo,[10] who has been working on gender within SANDF and has also been involved in work at the PMTC, highlighted this success with an example of the approval of a "Gender Advisors Course" as part of the training at the PMTC. This specific gender training was not seen as necessary by SANDF leadership until the United Nations recommended it as part of its broader WPS agenda.

UNSCR 1325 served as a political tool, the "Bible of gender" for this work, as one participant phrased it. Some of my interview partners were also aware that UNSCR 1325 had its shortcomings, but consistently repeated the importance of the document for their work: "Of course we are very happy to have 1325, *half a loaf is better than nothing*. So at least we can eat. We have got a mandate." [my emphasis] as Officer Kumalo put it. Thus, while recognising the limited nature of the resolution, such as weak language or its non-binding nature, at least gender work within SANDF can build on it and strategically use it to press for gender-focused training courses, gender mainstreaming and the increased deployment of women on peace missions.

In line with the broader national discourse and lauding of SANDF's successes in promoting gender equality, all of my participants said they understood and supported the goal of "equality" generally and also specifically regarding gender and within the armed forces. Almost everyone agreed that women should not be excluded from any area of SANDF or peacekeeping deployments, approving the mandate of UNSCR 1325. While this was the general trend, Officer Venter, a senior female officer without peace mission experience, often held more conventional opinions about women within the military. Although part of the broader gender structure of SANDF, she was the only one who disapproved of increasing women's participation in military peacekeeping deployments. Officer Venter argued that women should only be deployed as part of the supportive structures of the military, not in direct combat units, as they could never be as capable in combat as men.

10 The position and identity of those interviewed was anonymized. In addition to using pseudonyms for all interlocutors I concealed their rank, location, and sometimes background or experience.

However, everyone else agreed, either directly or indirectly with increasing women's presence in all areas of peacekeeping. While the limited space of this report does not permit deeper engagement with Officer Venter's narrative, it shows that diversity exists among SANDF members, and even within the "equal opportunity structures" of the organization. And yet, in line with most other interlocutors' statements it highlights the power of gendered essentialisms that I will discuss later in this chapter.

Overall, the problematic discursive productions of the 1325 framework, as outlined above, were markedly prevalent in participants' remarks. Specifically, a seemingly contradictory mix dominated involving a degendering discourse,[11] in which male and female soldiers are seen as equal with regard to soldierly capabilities, and a reaffirming discourse, where women's specific qualities as peacekeepers were highlighted. Although my interviewees' accounts stressed equal rights, it appeared that they mostly based their arguments for women's equal access and deployment on a degendering discourse, pointing out that women can do what men can do, instead of making rights-based arguments. While there was variety in the scope of the degendering, at times attributing it to both men and women, the gendered nature of the military institution was hardly considered, often rendering the degendering a masculinization of the discourse and people involved, as happens in many "mainstreaming" ventures that effectively become "malestreaming," referring to the reiteration of normalized masculinity within most institutions (Kronsell 2006; Solhjell 2014).

3.3.2 ESSENTIALISMS

Nevertheless, a reaffirmation of difference was also markedly prevalent in participants' conversations with me. A reaffirmed gendering of women served to highlight the "added qualities" they bring to peacekeeping. These were mainly framed in a positive light, similar to the utilitarian discussions that have emanated from the UNSCR 1325 framework outlined above, which are based on essentialist notions of femininity. My participants saw women as "naturally" more communal and peaceful, being approachable and always concerned with those around them. Such essentialist notions of gender and femininity were mainly specifically mentioned when talking about peacekeeping. These essentialist attributions also feature prominently in the broader WPS discourse, which arguably directly influenced my participants' arguments, especially since six of my interviewees did not have personal peace mission experience to inform their perspectives. The fact that these affirmative essentialisms were consistently repeated by my interviewees shows how much impact the essentialist discourse has.

In explaining their views, motherhood was mentioned by almost all interviewees as probably the most important feature dividing men and women with regard to the abilities and sensibilities necessary or lacking in individuals sent on peace missions. Women's ability to be mothers is argued to

11 Degendering is a process in which traditional gender stereotypes, norms and divisions are erased or undone. It works to reduce the power of gender as a social organizing principle (Lorber 2005; Wing 2008). The homogeneity of gender groups is questioned and similarities between genders are recognised instead (Sasson-Levy/Amram-Katz 2007).

enable women to be more empathetic, more approachable, and have better social skills and greater emotional resilience. For instance, Officer Mazibuko argues that:

> "As a woman – maybe right now, you don't have babies – but I have babies, I know the pain of giving birth. So the pain that is felt by those victims out there, women and children who are the most vulnerable people; you know if you are a woman you look at it, and you see that's my child. You know how to carry a baby, you get what I mean? Those feelings, they are coming back. Yes. Those feelings of humanity, those pains come back and what do they tell your mind? They tell your mind to come up with something to rescue the situation."

Officer Mazibuko stated that women's ability to have children naturally makes them more empathetic to local populations. Motherhood has been central to efforts to legitimize and ground the argument of women's inherent peacefulness (Skjelsbaek 2001) and is hence especially important in peace missions. In addition, interviewees mentioned women's domestic "skills" as added qualities they bring to peace missions. Officer Steyn, a middle ranking officer who had been on a peace mission, mentioned that without women deployed, the men in her unit "wouldn't want to clean, although they have to but they wouldn't want to. They wouldn't do stuff that they know they should. [...] They don't want to cook, we help them." It appears that essentialisms here, as shown by Helms (2003, 15) in the context of donor activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, work to reify women's roles as "extensions of their domestic roles."

It might be argued that the essentialisms referred to attribute positive features to women and are therefore not doing any harm. Yet, the negative effects even of affirmative essentialisms in the context of my study become obvious when highlighting how they all in one way or another relate to women's bodily difference and their specific location as (potential) mothers. The notion of women's universal motherhood is used as an argument for their inclusion in SANDF and peace missions, but at the same time is also used to highlight their inadequacy for deployment due to their bodily difference, specifically menstruation and supposed enhanced need for hygiene. When I asked Officer Kruger, "And why is it [lack of ablution facilities] a bigger problem for women?" she responded by saying:

> "I think it is because of our sanitation. I really think so. Because the hygiene is really... and what you do during menstruation? You know I had to take the [hormonal birth control] injection before I left. Because I bled too much. I can't even walk when I'm bleeding [...]. So that body is difficult and we will never be able to change that. So biologically, we have a, a thing."

The "difficult body" that women are trapped in renders them inadequate to many soldiering tasks, according to many of my interviewees. This has also been a very common and long held argument against women as soldiers generally. Cock (1989, 59) for instance mentions the same sentiments from sources in the 1980s, highlighting how "women are incapacitated through physiological functioning such as menstruation." In addition, Sion (2008, 578) tellingly argues: "Menstrual blood acts as a symbol through which gender identity is reflected, bringing to the surface what had otherwise been

erased. Emphasis of the most inherent differences between men and women is used against women as an excuse to exclude them." In addition, Officer Pienaar argues that women are difficult to have on the team even when not deployed because of pregnancies and maternity leave.

All women and some men in my interviews mentioned the inadequate nature of the facilities in deployment. I was told that often, all women have to share one bathroom or bedroom, while men have many more facilities available.[12] In addition, there have been many complaints about the inadequacy of military equipment for women, which was also brought up by some of those I interviewed. The extra work and resources required to adapt the facilities and equipment for a mixed sex defense force are often used to argue against women in the military and peace missions. Women are blamed for the normalized masculine structure of the military and peace missions, with the argument that women have special needs and requirements, whereas all along, they had just been shut out.[13]

The universal motherhood trope homogenizes all female soldiers, allows their gendered identity to override all other identity factors and locks them into a feminized position vis-à-vis their male counterparts. According to Peterson (2010), feminization is a devaluation within the system of patriarchy, and I would argue that this is even more the case within a masculinist organization such as the military. In a recent study of gender approaches in SANDF, Wilén and Heineken (2018) found very similar essentialist gender notions, specifically in relation to female soldiers. The (potential) motherhood of female soldiers was a very prominent theme in their research, too, and was interpreted as civilianizing female soldiers through being empathetic, caring and domestic.

While the relation of motherhood to femininity is often essentializing, especially if it is understood as naturally, necessarily and unchangeably connected to womanhood, in the South African context an analysis along African feminist lines can also offer different perspectives. Understanding motherhood as powerful and influential, instilling considerable and relational power in women who take on mothering responsibilities could be a vehicle for female soldiers to gain power within the peacekeeping venture and could also lead to regendered notions of power and influence.[14] Consequently, further investigating soldiers' ideas on motherhood as it relates to authority, power and influence in the context of military peacekeeping could yield interesting results.

The tension between equality, sameness and difference was thus highly visible in the accounts I collected: women and men are the same regarding soldiering, but women are still different,[15] effec-

12 In some units, women were not even deployed until 2010 because of the lack of facilities that could cater for mixed groups.

13 This is of course the same argument that has been used for centuries against any kind of equality between men and women, with the feminine always being produced as needy, inadequate and faulty vis-à-vis the male.

14 This could support or contribute to, in Duncanson and Woodward's (2016) words, regendering SANDF. "Regendering" refers here to a reorganization of gendered characteristics and relational power within the military and a revaluing of feminine characteristics. This could mean that motherhood and its related empathy could be re-coded as a positive asset for soldiers in peace missions without the reservations that exist now.

15 This appears to be similar in other contexts involving gender mainstreaming and women's inclusion within institutions. See for instance Benschop and Verloo (2006) or Mukhopadhyay (2004).

tively highlighting the normalized masculinity of SANDF. At the same time, the particular gendered difference of women has been the basis on which UNSCR 1325 is built; women (and children) are set apart from the unnamed rest of the world, which does not need mentioning because men are the norm. While essentialist notions are not exclusively reiterated within WPS discourses, the WPS discussions specifically encourage essentialization through UNSCR 1325 and its follow-ups. Although they are mostly affirmative, engaging uncritically in the discourses of these discussions keeps the sexual division of labor and symbolic power is intact, positioning female soldier peacekeepers as solely responsible for the soft skills in peacekeeping and feminizing these tasks, ultimately diminishing any critical gender perspective.

Therefore, UNSCR 1325 has not only had a positive impact on SANDF and its work for women's re-presentation, gender sensitivity and equality in peacekeeping. It has also produced distortions of the gender agenda, equating a gender perspective with adding women based on essentialized female qualities to justify their participation. While a few of my participants recognized the danger of gendered essentialisms despite their affirmative nature, and argued against the political and practical utility of these, they nevertheless engaged in them as much as their less critical colleagues. This means that the human rights approach upon which the new "rainbow nation" and also the transformation of SANDF was originally based appears to be diminishing (Heinecken 2013a)

3.3.3 IMPERIAL NOTIONS

Interestingly, the idea of the "empowered" South African woman-soldier serves as a way to produce South Africa as "progressive" and "modern" compared with "locals" in missions and with other peacekeeping forces. Many scholars and activists have highlighted that Othering and neo-colonial notions of primitivity, superiority and the savior narrative are prevalent in peacekeeping discourses (Hudson 2016; Razack 2004; Whitworth 2004). In this context, the idea of progress is specifically "embodied" in the visibility and participation of women.

My research partners continuously highlighted South Africa's progress and development compared with the rest of the continent. Officer Roberts, who has been working specifically on policy issues, expressed it like this:

> "[…] there is so much pressure put on South Africa, because we are like the United States in Africa, you know what I mean. We are supposed to be the best economy and we are seen as the lifesaver in Africa. […] not everybody wants to play a role but they haven't got the funds... so South Africa is burdened with this thing of having to take on Resolutions 1325 on its own and trying to be the superman in Africa."

As alluded to above, South Africa sees itself and has been seen by most of the international community as a continental role model, in Officer Roberts' words, the "superman" of Africa, a country that has almost "made it" and now has the responsibility of "saving" and "civilizing" the rest of the continent.

Through its peacekeeping engagements, South Africa constructs itself as the democratic role model, the epitome of equality and freedom. My interview partners appear very much engaged in depicting the nation using a sense of superiority and responsibility for the less developed Other, in brief based on the civilizing mission of SANDF.[16] This is described by Whitworth (2004, 185) as the "subject-constituting project of the colonial encounter" in peacekeeping. The South African national project gains more meaning through its peacekeeping/colonial encounter, which produces South Africa as the "superman," but also provides the raison d'être for SANDF (Whitworth 2004, 25).

The construction of South Africa as "civilizing the continent" also relates to the intimate entwining of the WPS discourse with ideas of "development" and "progress." "Gender equality" and "women's empowerment" have been on the developmental agenda for decades, and similarly serve as civilizing missions here, too.[17] This argument is based on the tendency to represent the "local woman" as inherently victimized by the primitive "local man." Officer Mazibuko explained that female peacekeepers created projects that were "intended to assist the local women, who are always the victims. You know, in the war-torn countries." This discourse is in accordance with the way that women are positioned in the vast majority of UN-related policies and documentation on women in contexts of war and hence also UNSCR 1325: predominantly as (potential) victims, especially of sexualized violence (Whitworth 2004). Officer Kruger described local men as perpetrators saying that, "[t]he [host country] males, I don't know, I don't think you would want to have a relationship with them. When you look at […] how they rape. [...] so they don't respect." Officer Kruger argues that female SANDF soldiers would not want to have relations with "those men" because of how they rape, yet, South Africa is the country with the highest incidence of sexualized violence (van den Berg et al. 2013). This shows how the discourse of South Africa as the superman for the "local" rest is infused with neo-colonial notions of the savior complex – albeit this time, the savior might be (an) African (woman).

In fact, Neocosmos (2008, 590) argues that South Africa does not see itself as a part of Africa, but understands Africa as "the place of the other." Officer Sithole, a middle-ranking female officer who was deployed to a peace mission, made remarks affirming this. She explained the social connections she made during her deployment: "[I] also met my African family that side [the peace mission area]." Although I did not ask about her own identification, her quote is telling as she considers "that side" to be Africa, while "this side," South Africa, is not Africa, really. "That side" is othered, showing how places of conflict where SANDF deploys peace missions are understood as places of the Other; those constantly referred to as "locals" or the "local community."

3.3.4 TRANSGRESSING ESSENTIALISMS

Nevertheless, despite the powerful discursive re-production of gendered essentialisms from the WPS agenda that were perpetuated by my participants when discussing peacekeeping and women's add-

16 Hudson (2016, 5) even argues that "[t]he real violence/harm of liberal peacebuilding is therefore found in the multidimensional way in which it engages in "othering" – through gendered and racialized forms."

17 See Abu-Lughod (2002).

ed qualities here, some significant departures from these were also found when other topics were being discussed. I encountered such tendencies in my conversations with SANDF members who are working directly or indirectly with gender. These relate especially to critical engagements with normalized and militarized masculinities in SANDF but also the broader South African society.

Firstly, some research participants appeared to have an in-depth understanding of gender, as they acknowledged it as a social construct that provides gender roles for men and women, which can, according to Officer Louw "change over time," instead of being naturally given. This is a significant deviation from the essentialist and naturalized notions of gender attached to most militaries and peacekeeping deployments described earlier. Thus, participants implicitly acknowledged possibilities for change and transformation from unequal power relations within the military. Moreover, some participants highlighted that there are different masculinities and femininities, even within the military, further contradicting the essentialist notions of gender they subscribed to when peacekeeping was the issue. This is vital in terms of aiming for transformation of institutions based on hypermasculine norms. The acknowledgment of diverse gender identities and performances without automatic devaluing is an important step. The contradiction between essentialist discourses that were prevalent when related to peacekeeping and more constructivist notions of gender on other topics show how pervasive and powerful the discourses perpetuated by the UNSCR 1325 framework are. As I showed, the essentialist understanding of gender roles is so normalized within the WPS discourse that it is hard not to fall into the trap of using these arguments for advocating for women in peacekeeping; even for those who otherwise question essentializing notions.

Secondly, some of my interviewees did not merely equate gender with women, as is effectively the case for instance in many UN documents or SANDF policies. Almost everyone who was familiar with the meaning of the term "gender perspective" emphasized that gender refers not only to women and women's issues, but just as much to men, too. One participant, for instance, argued that "gender is not only on women." This is significant, as the application of a gender perspective to both men and women in SANDF means a crucial change from broader institutional gender discourse. In these accounts, men were effectively gendered, instead of accepting masculinity as the invisible, non-gendered norm that does not need to be problematized. This is remarkable in the context of a (masculinist) state institution like the military, as it questions the conventional normalization of the masculine nature of these organizations. But it is also crucial in the context of the WPS discourse, which equates gender with women.

What is more, my interlocutors criticized current forms of masculinity within SANDF, arguing that it is important for men to change in order to create a more gender-equal and gender-sensitive force. This is significant, as in South Africa much work has been done by NGOs working towards gender justice, and important societal discourses on the necessity of transforming violent masculinities are in place.[18] Despite these activities, Ratele (2015) points out that government, political parties and

18 These include the contestations involving Jacob Zuma's rape trial in 2006 (Robins 2008) and, most recently, the movements related to #TheTotalShutdown, #MenAreTrash, which erupted following the national outcry around the extraordinarily high rate of violent gender-based crimes perpetrated against women in the country (Makama et al 2019).

organizations still need to be convinced of the necessity to work with men and boys to change problematic masculinities and achieve gender justice. This is particularly relevant since masculinities in South Africa have, according to Cock (2001), been constructed to be highly violent, with manhood tied to gun ownership, aggression and brutality since the apartheid era.

My research partners apparently recognized the structural and systemic nature of gendered inequality, which suggests that they were aware of the broader implications of their work, instead of merely aiming to add women. This also became clear as participants pointed out that this attitude change also needs to happen in soldiers' private lives, where men need to take on domestic and caring responsibilities. The societal context of SANDF was thus brought into the discussion by interviewees, as some argued that their work was hard because patriarchal ideologies were powerful in South Africa, despite wide-ranging policies to tackle gender inequality.

Engaging men in SANDF gender training appears to be achieving some success, at least in a quantitative sense, according to my interviewees, as many men are now enrolling in Gender Advisor and Gender for Instructor courses at the PMTC. While this only refers to men signing up for these courses and might relate to soldiers' desire for career advancement, undergoing such training should still have an effect on them. What this means is unclear though, especially given that cultural practices of masculinity have not yet been studied in gender training for peacekeepers (Laplonge 2015). Further research on the content and conduct of gender trainings at SANDF would be needed to understand possible effects.

These engagements with men for gender equality are already important positive changes from much of gender mainstreaming work in state institutions, and more so militaries. They indicate that at least members who work within the "gender structures" of SANDF critically engage with and problematize military masculinities within the institution and also broader South African society. Their questioning of the masculinist norm is even more significant if we consider Whitworth's (2004) argument that militarized masculinity has to be constantly confirmed and reinforced, since it is especially fragile.[19]

Thus, contrary to findings in other studies, such as by Simić (2014), Heinecken (2013a), Kronsell (2012) or Persson (2013), who draw attention to the lack of critical engagement and mere token gender work, findings in my study suggest the beginning of questioning and engagement with in-depth gender interrogation. My interviewees' accounts show that, while the gender discourse within SANDF, specifically as they refer to peacekeeping, seem to be directly influenced by UNSCR 1325, the independent work with gender in the force shows tendencies to surpass its premises, engaging in more critical and substantial questioning and transformation. Duncanson (2009; 2013; 2016) argues that peacekeeper masculinities can also have positive attributes and that they can work to challenge militarism through regendered militaries that are based on equality, respect and solidarity. My findings suggest that this could be in the making in SANDF, with members from within its gender structures

19 However, the heteronormative nature of the military and both militarized masculinity, as highlighted for instance by Peterson (in: Sjoberg/Via 2010), and femininity are not questioned at all.

moving beyond the problems addressed by UNSCR 1325 by asking critical questions about masculinities and engaging in work that moves beyond gender essentialisms.

In more recent research, Heinecken and Wilén (2018) also found in their study of returned peacekeepers that they challenge traditional masculinity within the military. The researchers argue this is primarily a result of the high number of female soldiers in the force. Through their mere physical presence female soldiers disrupt the masculinist environment and its assumed natural notions of embodied soldiering. Nevertheless, they argue that this, even together with the top-down gender policies of SANDF, is not sufficient to transform the force. Building upon this, my research findings suggest that the inclusion of transforming masculinities as the unmarked norm into gender transformation endeavors is necessary. The idea of the "half loaf" therefore also indicates that more ingredients are necessary to cook up a full recipe for SANDF's mandate for gender transformation, even though it is positioned in a highly favorable position within South Africa's project of transforming from apartheid injustice to equality. Thus, while SANDF has started changing peacekeepers' masculinity and femininity, based on the "half loaf" provided by the mandate and political power of UNSCR 1325, it ultimately needs to surpass the premises of the resolution to transcend the numbers game.

4. PROSPECTS OF ENGAGING WITH MASCULINITIES FOR GENDER-JUST PEACE

The findings suggest that questioning masculinities in the context of militaries is a central step towards transforming peacekeeping forces so that they can adequately contribute to peace. However, men and masculinities have remained primarily absent from the UNSCR 1325 agenda. Without any direct mention until 13 years after the first resolution, the framework and related policies have remained largely silent on the ways women's security and safety does not exist in a gendered vacuum.

Despite this screaming silence in the first years of UNSCR 1325, recent years have seen a slight increase in incorporating men and boys into the broader framework of WPS. Nevertheless, still only 3 out of 10 resolutions mention men or boys. UNSCR 2467 (2019) is significant here, as it urges member states to "challenge cultural assumptions about male vulnerability to violence" (Wright 2019). This most recent shift to refer to "cultural assumptions" about men and their vulnerabilities might denote the beginning of more meaningful and direct engagement with the genderedness of men. Nevertheless, it remains limited. Of course, men and masculinities have always been part of the UNSCR 1325 agenda both implicitly, through the invisible counterpart of the trope of the victimized woman, and very literally as policymakers, peacekeepers, and diplomats (Wright 2019).

Similar to the discourses outlined above, the focus on engaging men and boys into the WPS agenda has been framed as in part a general move towards male champions supporting the struggle for gender equality (Duriesmith 2017; Kirby/Shepherd 2016).[20] However, tensions remain about whether the focus on men and boys, both as actors in furthering gender equality and as victims of patriarchal

20 One large-scale example of this is for instance the "He for She" campaign by the UN.

gender relations, takes away resources and momentum from women and their specific activisms, needs and issues. In addition, the idea of male champions does not necessarily question unequal power relations, nor hold men responsible, and can run a serious danger of creating a neo-liberal "good men" industry instead of posing more substantial reconstruction of masculinities (Duriesmith 2017).

While there has been extensive research on the ways that peacekeeper masculinities can be violence centered and problematic or how "good men" can be enlisted to support the WPS agenda, there is of yet little research focusing on the transformative power of peacekeeper masculinities. More specifically, although UNSCR 1325 has been widely studied, very few researchers have connected peacekeeper masculinity and the potential transformative power of UNSCR 1325. The findings of my research point to concrete possibilities in the context of the SANDF.

4.1 ENGAGING WITH MILITARY MASCULINITIES AS A VANTAGE POINT FOR CHANGE? WAYS FORWARD

Crucial for change in the ways gender is "done" in the context of military peacekeeping is necessary for ensuring everyone's human rights are protected, including women's human rights. This requires an understanding of gender as involving intersecting relations of power and hierarchies between different masculinities, femininities and other gender identities, thus reframing what such identities mean and how they relate to the world (Valenius 2007). With regard to peacekeeper masculinities, Cockburn and Hubic (2002) first suggested possibilities of change towards regendered militaries. These authors (2002) highlight the opportunity of UNSCR 1325 for regendering national militaries and thus peacekeeping contingents. The authors ask questions imagining a military that is based on change in soldier identity available to both men and women, military culture focused on democratic equality, and army structures aimed at taking gender and sexuality seriously. Duncanson and Woodward (2016) take these ideas further by providing a theoretical framework for a regendered military, which highlights that incremental changes, which might seem small, could actually be indicative of transformational change of militaries.

Such incremental changes and smaller diversions of orthodoxies can be hard to detect. Ethnographic approaches to studying peacekeeping and the military are well suited to laying open such changes. On the one hand, due to the ways that ethnography studies the everyday, the doing and undoing of reality are scrutinized. On the other hand, ethnographic research implies a contextualized study of peacekeeping and the military (Millar 2018). This is even more important in the context of colonial legacies. Here, it is crucial to take care that a focus on masculinities does not reinforce colonial gazes and discourses based on the inherently violent nature of the Othered (black) man (Wright 2019).

Research aimed at better understanding of the changes in military/peacekeeper masculinities, commencing with the SANDF and its peacekeeping engagements, is necessary as one way of gauging the possibility of military peacekeeping contributing to positive peace. Another dimension that

should be emphasized in future research on how restructuring masculinities can contribute to peace and security is a focus on more historically, culturally and geopolitically contextualized power relations. Decolonial approaches are crucial here. This work might be especially fruitful in African contexts, where African feminist notions of complementarity, community and collaboration between women and men underlie the goal of overcoming racialized and colonial inequalities, violence and legacies. Instead of seeing a zero-sum game, then, there might be much to gain by engaging men and masculinities together with a focus on gender equality and transforming gender relations.

Ultimately, there is a seemingly unsolvable tension between the pragmatic implementation of the UNSCR 1325 agenda based on reified gender notions and the advancement of its most transformative sections which seek to overcome exactly these. This friction can, however, become productive if it is practically addressed in gender awareness training that tackles the constructions of femininities and masculinities to make visible how these are linked to power. It can only be productive if actors, implementers and activists are able to deal with the uncomfortable tension between the pragmatism that is necessary for holding states and actors accountable, on the one hand, and to maintain the core vision of feminist peace on the other. In the context of future research ventures, this means assessing ways in which the very real military engagements as (initial) steps for ensuring negative peace can contribute to positive and more holistic peace for everyone in a given society, with the knowledge of the connection between militarism, peacekeeping and peace as outlined above.

Concluding, for incremental changes to take place it would be wise to embrace the nascent challenge to normalized masculinity within the SANDF and use it as a starting point for working towards regendering the institution. This should include research on the ways that militaries, peacekeeping, and soldiers as well as peacekeepers is changing in order to identify (possibilities for) transformations (Duncanson/Woodward 2016). It should also include direct action. Given the changing demands on peacekeepers in the context of multidimensional missions as well as knowledge on gendered power relations in conflict contexts and militaries, training and education for peacekeepers needs to be adapted. This should include gender as a central power relation and start with gender training that identifies the first step for addressing (in)equalities in the training context and individuals' private lives. Moreover, training on gender equality needs to be contextualized, as called for by UNSCR 2493.

Creating military gender identities based on interdependence, empathy and equality can go a long way. Here meaningful collaboration with active and very well-equipped civil society actors in order to inform training and policies can be helpful. Civil society organizations have considerable knowledge and the ability to support the quest to change the conversation on the ways gender, peace and war are related and how peacekeeping soldiers and forces can become a vehicle for supporting peace. Importantly, harnessing the knowledge and experience of civil society requires it to be well-funded, respected and free.

South Africa, as a continental leader and major contributing country to peace missions is well positioned to influence the ways that African continental peacekeeping policies and training are conceptualized and implemented. The upcoming role as chair of the African Union also offers many

possibilities for South Africa to leave its mark by driving transformational and in-depth approaches to gender injustices.

Germany's goal of adding to the WPS agenda through sponsorship of UNSCR 2467 had mixed results given the current political climate that has seen a rollback of support for women's human rights by permanent members of the Security Council. Here, policymakers would be well advised to pay close attention to (German) civil society actors, who warned early about the incumbent strategic problems of the resolution at the time it was tabled. Thus, engaging much more closely with feminist civil society in a meaningful way should lead the way for German gender, peace and security policy work. German policymakers should moreover take a hard look at the ways that gendered essentialisms, stereotypes and simplified notions of gender affect policy discourses as well as political practice inside the country and in its international engagement. Lastly, donor strategies should reflect a commitment to localized, contextualized and transformative gender justice and allow for local ownership.

Crucially, the discourses and institutional practices of the UN and its sub-organizations need to change to move past essentialist and thus harmful notions of gender roles. Member states, but also individual diplomats, can play important parts here. South Africa and Germany both have a strong record of advocating the WPS agenda and have a responsibility to influence the organization to take gender as a crucial power relation seriously. With both countries currently non-permanent members of the council, even greater effort can be made to make the conversation less essentialist and more focused on transforming gender injustices towards equality and human rights for all. The findings of the present study thus have implications beyond South Africa. Human rights can only truly be universal when they apply to people without assumed gendered essentialisms based on their position in the world. Thus, breaking free of these deep-seated categories and ascriptions is a necessary step towards gender-just peace and human rights.

5. CONCLUSION

This report investigated the ways that members of the South African National Defence Force conceptualize and implement the normative agenda centered on UNSCR 1325 in peacekeeping. While the resolution has been a watershed for putting women's needs, rights and participation on the agenda of policy, advocacy and engagements in peace and conflict contexts, it has also drawn vehement criticism. Focusing on implementation and conceptual problems of the resolution, the report highlighted specifically gender essentialisms as central to the framework but as an obstacle to feminist visions of peace.

Although South Africa has become one of the few success stories of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 by sending a high proportion of female peacekeepers on peacekeeping missions, questions remain about the impact of the resolution beyond mere numbers. Consequently, this study investigated the ways that SANDF members understand UNSCR 1325 and gender equality, specifically as it relates to their experience and perspectives on peacekeeping. It found that UNSCR 1325 is central to

furthering the “gender agenda” in SANDF and that the resolution has had a powerful impact on the ways that gender and peacekeeping were made sense of among the people interviewed. While women’s participation was supported and degendering discourses deployed, on the other hand the gender essentialisms prominently produced in the resolution were reproduced, effectively purporting gendered difference and women’s added qualities to peacekeeping as a reason for gender integration. Moreover, colonial notions were present in interviewees accounts, which highlights the ways that the peacekeeping endeavor and South Africa’s specific national identity paired with its foreign policy goals produced it as the “superman in Africa.” Nevertheless, when not discussing peacekeeping specifically, members of the gender structures also asked in-depth questions, specifically on men’s role in gender equality and the normalized military masculinity in the force. This is significant, as it showed the powerful impact of problematic essentialist discourses concerning gender and peacekeeping as shaped by UNSCR 1325, but also transgressions of these. Such questions are central to moving from mere superficial gender work to engaging in questions of power and transformation.

Lastly, the potential for harnessing these initial questions on masculinity in order to work towards creating a regendered military in which solidarity, respect and equality are central values were outlined. For this, paying attention to small changes and challenges within highly gendered contexts such as military peacekeeping is helpful. In order to pinpoint the transformative power of these changes, a research agenda and actions were proposed for ultimately supporting and informing transformation of the ways that militaries and the UN conceptualize and carry out peacekeeping towards feminist peace. Here adapting an understanding of gender approaches to be about power relations is central. South Africa and Germany are both in favorable positions for exercising meaningful influence on transforming the WPS agenda in the direction of recognizing and safeguarding everyone’s human rights and gender-just peace.

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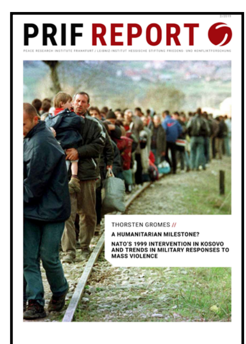

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Almost 20 years after the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), it remains an important instrument in feminist lobbying and gender-sensitive peacekeeping. While the resolution is considered a major step towards protecting women's rights in conflict zones and contributing to gender just peace, criticism is widespread and questions remain about its impact beyond statistics.
This report takes a closer look by investigating the ways that UNSCR 1325 has been conceptualized and put into practice in the South African National Defence Force. South Africa is deploying a relatively high proportion of female peacekeepers, but shortcomings of UNSCR 1325, specifically related to gender essentialisms, have affected discourses within the armed forces. While this has led to contradictions and contestations concerning sameness and difference among male and female peacekeepers, the study also reveals a critical engagement with military peacekeeper masculinities, pointing towards a surpassing of the limited premise of UNSCR 1325.

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MASCULINITIES IN PEACEKEEPING. LIMITS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF UNSCR 1325 IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

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