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REVIEW ESSAY

KEY PUBLICATIONS FOR THE ESSENTIAL STUDY OF WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

Mary Raum

Conflict-Related Violence against Women: Transforming Transition, by Aisling Swaine. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018. 334 pages. \$99.

Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military: An International Comparison, ed. Robert Egnell and Mayesha Alam. Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2009. 278 pages. \$110.95.

The Oxford Handbook on Women, Peace, and Security, ed. Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True. Cambridge, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018. 869 pages. \$175.

The year 2020 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the formal beginning of the global initiative on women, peace, and security (WPS) introduced by the United Nations (UN) Security Council, when that body unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 in acknowledgment of the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. The year 2020 also will mark ten years of the Naval War College formally recognizing WPS as a program of effort.

Today, Resolution 1325 is considered a watershed political framework highlighting that women and gender perspectives are relevant to negotiating peace

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agreements, planning refugee camps, developing programs for conflict inclusion, conducting peacekeeping operations, and reconstructing war-torn societies for sustainable peace. While the word “women” is part of the title of the resolution, the scope of the WPS field is not so narrow. The field no longer is regarded as just a gendered set

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of issues; replacing that singular scope are programs, ideas, and missions that are part of the global peace and security platform that involves all populations experiencing preconflict, conflict, and postconflict situations.

Crucial records of conversations in the area are hard to find. As occurs in all paradigm shifts, while the WPS domain has achieved maturity over two decades of growth and change, the creation of original written installations and inputs, by those who were in the WPS arena from its inception, has reached a plateau. Many originators—those with the deepest and longest-lasting experience as initiators of WPS programs—have moved on. Now there is arising the publication of second- and third-tier books claiming an association with WPS. This new wave tends to underestimate the globalized, interdisciplinary expertise required to publish a seminal work. Keeping the WPS agenda crisp and moving forward requires filtering through the piles of junk that keep appearing to recognize writing that is of long-term value and high quality and that demonstrates theoretical and practical knowledge and penetrating analysis about WPS. It is the latter sort of works that will pay benefits to future generations.

The three books reviewed here fit that category, not only because of their future value, but also because their authors have devoted a minimum of a decade of effort to some aspect of WPS, whether as military personnel, researchers, program organizers, or field-workers.

CONFLICT-RELATED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: TRANSFORMING TRANSITION

While book specialists place Aisling Swaine's *Conflict-Related Violence against Women* under the category of international law, her work is far more than a legal treatise. Sexual violence and its impacts on conflict and peace constitute a critical and growing area of interest. The subject has received increased attention at the UN level as constituting a challenge to peaceful societies. Between 2008 and 2019, the institution passed six new resolutions directed at the problem. Two primary events brought official attention to this form of violence: the 1993 mass rapes of Yugoslavian women, which helped lead to creation of the International Criminal Tribunal; and the 1994 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which for the first time defined rape as a war crime. Swaine's book stands out among those that address sexual violence and war because the author, as a humanitarian aid specialist, has met and lived among women and in their communities. The book's approach to the subject is unique because it does not merely present alarmist data and stories, as most examinations do. Swaine's discourse does more than measure violence and report on it; it offers new thinking about the qualitative nature of the phenomenon of sexual violence.

The course of the conversation does not keep to the normal, narrow, definitional range, that of the war rape of women; instead, its scope expands to include

all people who experience these extremely damaging and demeaning situations, including investigating physical, emotional, and economic injuries linked to the abuse. Violence is defined in a new way: as being ambulant, not static. The author considers transgressors who commit acts of physical criminality and inflict forms of emotional and physical loss as being the paramount factor in the sexual violence equation. The book also explores whether peacetime violence can provide a clue to what may happen during a conflict. The discussion differentiates between the prevailing “transitional” attitude applied to sexual violence after a conflict and a recommendation to embrace transformational approaches, and especially to take into consideration the numerous additional harms arising from and associated with this form of viciousness.

As support for these ideas, the author presents three case studies covering sexual violence: in the Southeast Asian nation of Timor-Leste, in Northern Ireland, and in the West African coastal nation of the Republic of Liberia. Selecting three distinct cultures to serve as backdrops enhances understanding of sexual violence’s ties to conflict. *Conflict-Related Violence* is well researched, with all referenced citations drawing on informative sources, and it is evident that the work is a first-person creation, not a jog through Google hits. Its only weakness is that at times its “dissertation-speak” outweighs the author’s more naturally formulated philosophical thoughts and ruminations.

WOMEN AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN THE MILITARY: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Another must-read for any person connected with WPS is a review of the newest work, edited by Robert Egnell and Mayesha Alam, titled *Women and Gender Perspectives in the Military: An International Comparison*. Egnell is one of the most significant documenters of WPS themes and stands as an important change agent in putting forward ideas about the global WPS agenda, with an emphasis on the security and military aspects of WPS. Egnell’s role as an active-duty captain in the Swedish army reserve, his advanced theoretical knowledge, and his current post as vice-chancellor of the Swedish Defence University make his contributions unique. He knows the military, knows the security sector, and thinks deeply about WPS. His coeditor, Mayesha Alam, is one of the founding members and served as deputy director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security in Washington, DC, and she has experience in policy design and implementation with the UN and the World Bank.

Included in the volume are twelve pieces by different authors, all of whom are recognizable to those who have been involved with WPS over the past two decades. Both cross-national analyses and process and contextual elements—from Sweden, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, the United States, NATO, and UN peacekeeping—are represented. Inclusion of treatments of the nations

of Australia, the Netherlands, and Sweden was essential owing to their cutting-edge approaches to accepting WPS thinking and inculcating it into their defense psyches. If there are any weaknesses to this selection they are a heavy emphasis on nations that have not experienced and are not experiencing conflict intrusions and a reliance on examples from social democratic systems of governance. It also is well past the time when the female engagement team, dating from the era of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, should continue to serve as the U.S. example of WPS security-sector experience. More essential now is to ruminate on the modernization of the U.S. military, which formally has sanctioned the entrance of women into the combat arms; as that evolution unfolds, there will be numerous important new areas for discussion.

The book has value as both a text and an informational resource. It embraces a wide swath of important topics specific to the security sector. It provides a meaningful review regarding military patriarchies, and a walk through both the four pillars of UN Resolution 1325 (known as participation, prevention, protection, and gender mainstreaming) and the positive repercussions that result when a gender perspective is added to military systems. One piece covers the history of how the UN resolution evolved and who was influential in inserting the gender question into global affairs. Other unique ideas presented are soldier discrimination, internal military gender regimes, and case-based studies highlighting the Australian Defence Forces and the South African military gender programs. The editors conclude with a set of concise, thoughtful, and vital takeaways drawn from the contributions chosen for this volume; they also emphasize the difficulties involved in generalizing about such a complicated field of effort.

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK ON WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY

Every person involved in the WPS field should at least review the content of this first Oxford handbook on the subject. It is likely to be the most crucial, exhaustive resource on WPS extant in this decade. Coeditor Sara E. Davies holds a professorship at the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University in Australia; Jacqui True occupies a professorship of international relations, serves as director of the Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre, is an Australian Research Council Future Fellow, and is a Global Fellow at the Peace Research Institute Oslo in Norway.

The size of this work—869 pages—precludes it from being a mobile resource, so its greatest value is as a desk reference. As is typical of products from Oxford University Press, given its high standards, this presentation is of exceptional quality and range. The sixty-seven contributors are all leading scholars, advocates, and policy makers with links to WPS. The scope of the ideas treated is vast, so the handbook is organized into six primary parts: concepts of WPS, pillars of WPS,

institutionalizing WPS, implementing WPS, cross-cutting agenda connections and mainstreaming, and ongoing and future challenges. Not only is the content within each part useful to researchers and practitioners of WPS, but the organization of the content also is well developed. Very few existing compilations ensure first that the theoretical and contextual ideas represented in the formal aspects of Resolution 1325 are dealt with, then follow up by recounting implementation experiences. Nor is the effort often made, as it is here, to incorporate the field's updated philosophy: that WPS is a cross-cutting security-sector platform, no longer merely a one-dimensional concern. A final segment highlighting future challenges allows a review of the qualitative and quantitative ideas that some of the best thinkers in the field see as fundamental to achieving progress.

Some exciting content in the first half of the handbook includes the discourse on the contested meanings of WPS, as well as what produces success and what tends to fail programmatically across the four WPS pillars. The international relations topics treated are broadly inclusive, embracing transnational networks; NATO; and the world's least-addressed regions—the African Union, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. Both the programmatic and field-experience aspects of implementation programs are described for the nations of Afghanistan, Australia, China, Norway, Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Philippines, Sierra Leone, and Syria. This geographical selection provides a mix of information, ranging from that drawn from the more peaceful Western societies of Norway and Australia to that pertaining to parts of the world where women have experienced extensively documented gendered violence and abuse. PNG is representative of places where levels of violence against women are particularly virulent, owing to the social legitimization of abuses of human rights. In Sierra Leone, the brutality visited on women over an eleven-year civil war, the current situation of food insecurity, and the lack of access to agricultural resources portray a cross-cutting example of the long-term stressors that impact women particularly. Syria provides an example in which formal rights for women exist on the statute books but extremists continually impose restrictions on these same statutory rights.

Some of the insights presented, while perhaps not exclusive to this volume, are included in WPS readings only rarely. Among these are deliberations about gender and disabilities, LGBTI inclusivity, and postcolonialism; the last mentioned examines the impacts on present-day cultures of the social and political bases of past societies. Also worth noting is coverage of two of the newest WPS debate zones: the contested meaning of WPS; and the challenges involved in, but also the importance of, formally monitoring and analyzing the field of WPS regarding scholarship, book content, and academic programs.

