Fighting for Gender Equality: Why Security Sector Actors Must Combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

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In 2012, the NATO Chicago Summit Declaration included a paragraph on the widespread use of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations. Previously, at the NATO Lisbon Summit in 2010, the Alliance called for a strong and effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and related resolutions throughout all of its activities. These public declarations indicate clear and concrete recognition of the changing nature of modern conflicts, and an acknowledgement by NATO of the importance of women and girls when it comes to building sustainable long-term peace. This acknowledgement, and the Chicago declaration, was much needed. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a pernicious problem encountered far too often in conflict and post-conflict societies. Military actors like NATO subsequently need to begin...
addressing SGBV as they do traditional modern security threats such as terrorism, piracy, weapons proliferation, or cyber warfare.2

ISSUES OF EQUALITY AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is an aggressive act often equated with rape, which is defined as sexual intercourse with another person without his or her consent. The underlying factors in many sexually violent acts are power and control, not, as is widely perceived, a craving for sex. Rarely is SBGV a crime of passion; rather, it is a violent, aggressive, and hostile act used as a means to degrade, dominate, humiliate, terrorize, and control the victim.3 According to the United Nations, SGBV is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender or sex, and includes many types of abuses, including sexual threats, exploitation, humiliation, assaults, molestation, domestic violence, incest, involuntary prostitution (sexual bartering), torture, insertion of objects into genital openings, and attempted rape.4 Underlying many acts of this kind of violence both in conflict and in peacetime are gender inequalities where men, and what men do, are valued more highly than women and what women do.5,6 SGBV in conflict-affected environments can also be influenced by culturally accepted ideas about what it means to be a man and to be a woman.7 Female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices can thus be considered forms of SGBV.

According to UK Foreign Minister William Hague, SGBV is used in conflict as a weapon of war, substituted for guns and tanks.8 It terrorizes civilian populations, and it humiliates, scars, and aims to destroy ethnic, religious, or opposition groups.9 SGBV must therefore be understood as a security issue, mandating a security-oriented response. It must also be understood as a challenge which lingers into post-conflict periods of re-building, and one which is also prevalent in non-conflict contexts, including within the borders of the NATO alliance members and partners. But while almost everyone agrees that gender equality is a critical,
related goal to the elimination of SGBV, and that SGBV constitutes a serious security problem, there has been slow progress on the underlying broader gender equality front among most nations, including within NATO and among its partners. SGBV is arguably a symptom of inequality—gender inequality. The number of female personnel and staff in NATO forces remains very low, ranging between 2 and 15 percent, signifying that NATO is not yet an equal opportunity workplace. In May 2014, Major General Kristin Lund of the Norwegian Army will become the first female force commander assigned to lead a UN mission (UNFICYP—the UN Mission to Cyprus), but NATO has yet to see such progress in its missions.

In order to contribute to continued progress, this article explores the gender equality dimensions of peace and security based on the assumption that military organizations constitute a central actor in the effort to eliminate SGBV, both in terms of national progress in achieving gender equality, as well as externally in delivering equal security for men and women when conducting any military operation or mission. Within this context, the focus of this paper is NATO’s externally-focused work, looking closely at its role in addressing SGBV in both conflict and non-conflict zones in light of NATO’s substantial efforts to integrate a gender perspective across all of its work.

This article provides a brief outline of the current global state of efforts to address SGBV; explains the role that NATO and other military organizations could play in helping to end SGBV; and details the challenges NATO has faced, and will face, as it works to implement the global women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, which it has supported since 2007. This discussion closely examines what this agenda means for NATO’s work on SGBV, critically considering SGBV as a security problem that can be addressed by military actors, and what this response will entail in terms of organizational change. The article concludes with recommendations to policymakers and military leaders, as well as to potentially new security actors such as companies and non-governmental organizations on how to further improve the work of eliminating SGBV.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

In October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted UNSCR 1325, the first thematic resolution on WPS. This resolution recognizes the disproportionate impact that wars and conflicts have on women and children, and highlights the fact that women have been historically left out of peace processes and stabilization efforts. UNSCR 1325 calls for the full
and equal participation of women at all levels, in issues ranging from early conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction, peace, and security. This first resolution was later followed by six additional resolutions (UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, and 2122). Together, these resolutions frame the WPS agenda, which seek the broad goals of peace, security and gender equality. The underpinning strategies to achieve these objectives are women’s empowerment; protection, participation, and prevention (of violence); gender balance; and gender mainstreaming.

THE NATO APPROACH TO THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

NATO is fully committed to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, as well as to the related UNSCRs on conflict-related sexual violence. Since NATO’s 2007 adoption of the NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) Policy on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325, significant progress has been made in integrating a gender perspective within NATO. Policy frameworks have been adopted and working mechanisms developed in order to support the implementation of UNSCR 1325 throughout NATO’s entire structure. In April 2014, the revised NATO EAPC Policy was released, providing the organization with the necessary direction and tools to further enhance the integration of a gender perspective, notably in the fields of crisis management, cooperative security, and collective defense.

A significant and symbolic step was taken with the appointment of the Norwegian Diplomat Marie Skåre as Special Representative to the NATO Secretary General on Women, Peace and Security in 2012. This action in itself placed the WPS presence high on the agenda, which in turn stands to facilitate faster implementation. At the NATO strategic command level, both Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) are currently working on the institutionalization of an integrated gender perspective. According to the NATO definition, the integration of gender perspective is a way of assessing gender-based differences of women and men reflected in their social roles and interactions in the distribution of power and the access to resources.

Work is also well underway in regards to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions in all planning, preparation, execution, and evaluation of NATO operations and missions. Since the former Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) Admiral (retd.) James Stavridis appointed the first ACO Gender Advisor, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Command Group became
OFFICIAL NATO DEFINITIONS

Gender perspective

“The integration of gender perspective is a way of assessing gender-based differences of women and men reflected in their social roles and interactions, in the distribution of power and the access to resources. In ACO and ACT activities it is used synonymously with implementing the requests of UNSCR 1325, related Resolutions, as well as directives emanating from NATO. The aim of which is to take into consideration the particular situation and needs for men and women, as well as how the activities of NATO have different effects on them. More fundamentally, implementing a gender perspective is done by adapting action following a ‘gender analysis.’”

Gender mainstreaming

“The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

Gender equality

“…equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male.”
fully committed to these efforts, and has begun developing the structures, trainings, and education needed to achieve progress across all organizational levels. A robust ACO Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points structure has been established, and consists of male and female military officers.

One of the main achievements for NATO’s military component, which is currently the preeminent blueprint regarding the implementation of gender perspectives into military organization and operation, has been the development of the practical proposals and guidelines for implementing UNSCR 1325 through the revised Bi-Strategic Directive (Bi-SC) 40-1.14 This revised directive, approved in August 2012, is the only document of its kind that has been endorsed both by the highest governing body of NATO, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and the Defense Ministers of the Alliance through their approval of the Bi-Strategic Implementation Plan in October 2013. It is a comprehensive directive providing relevant guidance regarding the “why,” “what,” “who,” and “how” to ensure integration of a gender perspective in military organizations and forces. If properly disseminated, reinforced and implemented, the directive responds to several challenges regarding the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions.15 The creation of a NATO structure to ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and gender mainstreaming is another significant achievement. This has been realized through the creation of the positions of gender advisors and gender focal points throughout the organization, including the joint force commands at the operational level, accompanied by the creation of gender field advisors at the tactical level. However, there is a perceived gap between the spoken commitment to gender mainstreaming and the resources actually in place.

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that gender advisors often work in a solitary capacity, and without strong outspoken support from their commanders. Many times they also need to fight the internal perception that a narrow focus such as ‘gender’ should not command so much influence in the staff processes. These challenges continue to hamper the effectiveness of efforts to implementation mechanisms for UNSCR 1325 and Bi-SC Directive 40-1 on the military strategic, operational and tactical levels.

NATO has made some clear headway, but admittedly is also struggling with how to incorporate the ideas and changes needed to fully integrate a gender perspective. As NATO has taken a stand to ensure that its work will address SGBV though, let us look closer at how SGBV could be seen in this context, and what organizational change remains needed in order to create the capacity to fully address SGBV.

**WHY IS SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE A SECURITY THREAT?**

SGBV is a serious, present-day crisis affecting millions of people—not just women, but also men, girls, and boys. The global incidence of SGBV is staggering, and efforts aimed at the prevention of, or protection against, SGBV remain insufficient. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least one out of every three women in the world will be beaten, raped, or otherwise abused during her lifetime. According to the same WHO study violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer.\(^{16}\) Its toll on women’s health surpasses that of traffic accidents and malaria combined. Representing a major threat to human security, survivors of sexual assault are three times more likely to suffer from depression, six times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, thirteen times more likely to abuse alcohol, twenty-six times more likely to abuse drugs, and four times more likely to contemplate suicide.

Before further discussing the grim realities of modern SGBV, it is important to reflect on the fact that sexual violence is a continuum of many different acts and behaviors. It is described in a model called ‘The Sexual Violence Continuum’ as a whole span of acts ranging from misogynic practices to rape/murder.\(^{17}\) In a conflict setting we often only learn about the extreme rape/murder end of this continuum. However, many less obvious acts also occur with significant repercussions. This continuum is not restricted to traditional conflict settings, but also takes place in our own countries, as will be discussed later in this article.

That NATO and other military and security actors should be involved in addressing SGBV has not been a decision that has come without a
struggle. So why should NATO consider SGBV to be such a security threat that they as a global military organization needs to deal with it?

Whereas war could traditionally be described as interstate territorial disputes fought by opposing armies on the battlefield, modern warfare is predominantly intrastate or domestic, waged by non-state actors and triggered by any combination of issues related to identity, ethnicity, religion, or resource competition. This changing nature of warfare spurs the use of conflict-related SGBV. Like traditional weapons, SGBV can be used by leaders to achieve political, military and economic ends, and it destroys the very fabric of society. Some armed groups, for example, have been ordered to use rape tactically, as was the case with Bosnian Serb forces during the war in the Balkans. Nearly every day, the United Nations and its representatives receive reports from the field about sexual violence used as a tool of war or as a result of the massive, negative impact war has on a society, for example, in destroying institutions and rule of law which might otherwise prevent SGBV. Recent research finds that it is rather the latter than the former—that SGBV is increased by and caused by the conflict rather than being a tactic of war. SGBV has serious and long-lasting effects for individuals and the community, and, hence, major implications for the likelihood of sustainable peace.

Acts of SGBV not only maim victims mentally and physically, but they also sow seeds of destruction within entire communities. Female survivors can become pregnant and, along with men and boys, can become infected with sexually transmitted diseases, or develop fistulas or incontinence. According to the UN, in some cases, women have even been intentionally infected with HIV for the purpose of causing a “slow death.” In countries where armed conflict is rife, rape is often a tool of war. Reports on rape during conflict detail profound brutality towards women and girls, including serious beatings, mutilation or removal of the genitals, rape with sharp objects, and gunshots to the genitals. Due to systematic and exceptionally violent gang rapes, doctors in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) now classify vaginal destruction as a war crime. Thousands of Congolese girls and women suffer from vaginal fistula—tissue tears in the vagina, bladder and rectum—after surviving brutal rapes in which guns, branches, and broken bottles were used to violate the women.
Their own families also regularly reject them. In our lifetimes, millions of women, children, and men have endured this horror in countries including Bosnia, Colombia, the DRC, Liberia, Rwanda, and Uganda. Only twenty years ago, tens of thousands of women were subjected to sexual slavery and forced pregnancy in purpose-built rape camps in Bosnia. More than 400,000 women, between the ages of 15 and 49, experienced rape between 2006 and 2007 in the DRC. That is equivalent to 1,152 women raped every day, forty-eight women raped every hour, or four women raped every minute. These statistics only partially underscore how SGBV in conflict affects victims, their families, communities, and a broader societal ability to undertake conflict resolution and peacebuilding. There are some questions raised about counting numbers and presenting them as alarming statistics since “the quantitative data on conflict-related sexual violence currently available does little more than serve to dramatize the issue.” Some researchers note that, in some instances, data is derived from vulnerable environments then extrapolated to estimate the problem among a broader population.

Another undisputable fact is that men and boys are also vulnerable to a range of gender-specific forms of sexual violence in conflict situations. They can themselves be raped, forced to perform sexual acts on the perpetrator, forced to rape other civilians (including their own family members), or forced to watch the rape of their kin. Men are also the victims of forced sterilization through castration, or are subjected to genital violence not intended to sterilize, forced nudity and forced masturbation—of the victim and the perpetrator. Male sexual violence is particularly prevalent in detention settings as has been documented, for instance, in Libya, Afghanistan, and Syria. Such violence is also perpetrated in the context of military operations, military conscription and abduction, as well as in camps and shelters, where boys are particularly vulnerable.

As can be seen there are both similarities and differences between the violence SGBV affecting women, men, girls and boys. Those differences and similarities must be identified and analyzed in order to inform and

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influence the operational planning on political, military strategic, operational and tactical initiatives to prevent SGBV. These plans give direction and guidance for the preparation, training, education, conduct and evaluation for operations and missions.

Unfortunately, such atrocities will likely see continued use as impunity and the lack of functioning legal structures present tremendous obstacles to overcome. A robust and well-functioning reporting and monitoring system, together with the proper collection of evidence, are initial necessities where the military structures do have an important role to play. Correct mechanisms need to be put in place to prevent SGBV, and to protect the people most at-risk. As the previous UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström once said, “the myth that rape is inevitable in times of war still lingers, but if sexual violence can be planned, it can be punished; if it can be commanded, it can be condemned.”

Many armed groups, including some state militaries, left-wing insurgent groups, and secessionist ethnic groups, do not engage in widespread rape despite frequent interaction with civilians on otherwise intimate terms. This indicates that sexual violence must not be considered a ‘natural law’ of any conflict or post-conflict setting.

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In order to decrease the cost of war and to ensure a more sustainable peace, SGBV concerns many actors and stakeholders, including international and regional organizations as well as national organizations. Security actors like NATO need to address and act upon this and work within their mandates as the armed security forces in conflict and non-conflict zones. In addition to the more traditional security threats faced by security forces
deployed into conflict zones, these military actors could be equipped, trained, and ready to respond to the additional security threats that face SGBV victims.

**EQUALITY AND SGBV WITHIN NATO MEMBER AND PARTNER STATES**

It must not be forgotten that the continuum of sexual and gender-based violence is broad, and is not exclusive to conflict or post-conflict settings. The NATO nations are themselves struggling with the integration of women into their military forces. This year’s NATO Conference subsequently includes the theme of the recruitment and retention of women in our armed forces. Moreover the institutionalization and full integration of gender perspectives is still in its initial phase, and structures and systems are still being developed. NATO is a large and complex organization that cannot change too rapidly without the risk of losing previously achieved progress. Therefore, a gender perspective is not yet fully realized in all of NATO’s preparations for the defense of NATO member state territory, or within its crisis management plans. How to optimally ensure equal protection of men and women in a crisis is, therefore, not fully considered. These internal weaknesses constitute challenges when NATO addresses SGBV. This begs the question: how can NATO, with its own internal gender-related challenges, credibly respond to the security problems and participation of women in its external operations?

The short answer: NATO cannot. This will constitute challenges when addressing SGBV. One positive is that the pervasive ‘boys will be boys’ attitude within military institutions, including peacekeeping operations, is slowly changing. In Australia, Canada, and the United States, among other countries, military culture is under increasing scrutiny, and the armed forces are trying to better understand, prevent and respond to cases of sexual harassment and abuse, discrimination, and sexualized treatment of female personnel. They are also trying to eradicate often widespread cultures that encourage silence and hostility toward victims.

Within the context of NATO, SGBV occurs in all NATO member states, including partner nations, within related organizations, and within
the military ranks of our member countries. The sexual harassment, 
discrimination, sexual abuse, and sexual assault in our own institutions 
must not be left out from the picture of SGBV’s threat to peace and secu-

rity. A victim of SGBV perpetrated by a fellow soldier, officer or other offi-
cial within an organization where trust is fundamental for unit cohesion is 
disconcerting. In the United States, the Department of Defense found a 
rise in post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among victims of SGBV 
within the military forces. These internal considerations also matter in 
relation to the execution of operations and missions; if there is not respect 
and protection within a unit, the ability to deliver respect and protec-
tion for the local population can and will be questioned. According to 
the website Protect Our Defenders, the U.S. military had 26,000 reported 
sexual crimes cases in 2012 alone. Even if this is a troubling statistic, it 
must also be kept in mind that underreporting is a norm in SGBV cases. 
Whether this is a U.S.-specific problem, or if the situation reflects that of 
most Alliance member’s and partner’s domestic defense organizations, has 
not yet been fully investigated. However, this hampers progress towards 
gender equality, and negatively impacts both the recruitment and retention 
of women, as well as some men, as it must be noted that a large number of 
the sexual assaults in the U.S. military are perpetrated against men.

Clearly, SGBV is not prevalent only within the global south and in 
traditional conflict settings, and for NATO to demand that other nations 
deal with SGBV, NATO members and partners themselves must turn 
inwards and address the problems within their own borders. Should this 
obligation be overlooked, NATO’s credibility risks being called into ques-
tion when working with other nations’ or host nation forces, and the essen-
tial relationship of trust between NATO forces and occupied populations 
will most likely deteriorate.

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: ADDRESSING SGBV THROUGH 
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

But what does it mean for a military organization to address the ‘new’ 
form of security threat of SGBV in support of the global WPS agenda? And 
what are the aspects that need to be considered when seeking to achieve 
lasting organizational change?

While NATO has successfully formed much of the necessary internal 
structures to address the problem of SGBV in its operations, effective 
implementation throughout the whole chain of command still remains to 
be fully realized. The work must start internally, though an external focus
can reinforce and drive the internal process in order for gender issues both internal and external to become imprinted in NATO’s organizational DNA.

Within the NATO structure, work has been taking place at several levels. Key components include the NATO Strategic Commands: ACO, which is responsible for NATO Operations and Missions including planning; and ACT, which is responsible for education and training. The approach to internal implementation inside ACO in particular has been to transform the thinking, planning, and conduct from within. ACO recognized from the beginning that the creation of something new and unknown would likely generate a great deal of resistance. By altering the normative organizational behavior of ACO through the integration of UNSCR 1325 and gender perspectives into existing structures, systems, and processes, the success rate in achieving gender-based goals has been tremendous.

Dealing with a theory of change for NATO’s integration of gender perspectives including the increased attention to SGBV has been instrumental for ACO’s transformation and implementation. The Swedish Armed Forces has served as a model for the ongoing ACO transformation. In short, the model deals with the concept of organizational ownership and responsibility. If the aim is to achieve lasting change, one must involve internal actors and stakeholders. For ACO, this meant finding and defining internal stakeholders and actors who would assume responsibility for the change process as well as for reaching the desired end state. The agents for change have purposefully been people with substantial understanding and knowledge of the organization they will try to impact. This means that they can easily communicate and relate to both the people as well as the tasks conducted. Ownership from the responsible organization (including regional ones) is, as in any transformation process, crucial.

Based on prior experience with organizational change, it is clear that one of the most common reasons for failure is a neglect of the organization’s culture. In a military organization, it is imperative to understand...
the military culture and its potential impact on a change process. It is also vital to accept that there may be resistance to change at the organizational as well as individual levels. Such resistance occurs for various reasons. For many, a change process can be perceived as a threat to their positions, or the proposed change can challenge existing values and culture. Most importantly, if the reasons behind a change process are not fully understood by those in the institution, resistance is much more likely to occur.

Military organizations have long dealt with the challenge of having a deeply rooted culture and values which makes resistance to top-down changes common. To ensure success, ACO dedicated considerable effort to anchoring the change processes, and focused on bringing on board key leaders, both formal and informal, throughout the organization. But changing the mindset of the whole organization will take time. Creating and fostering change is not only about building competence on gender and women’s perspectives; it requires skills in sociology and change management, too. It must be understood that the integration of gender perspective will be made mainly on the organization’s own terms, and ownership of these issues in the organization is a must.

OPERATIONAL EFFECTS OF AN INTEGRATED GENDER PERSPECTIVE

When NATO started this work, gender was not even on their agenda. Today, it is a main objective and present within the core of the organization. Currently, an increasing number of organizations want to bring a gender perspective to bear in their work. Change is possible if the right instruments are in place. Change is more likely to become successful if it is built on already existing and well accepted structures and processes, rather than to develop something “stand alone” or parallel. We will examine what could be done. What does already exist and function within the current military structures which could also leverage the intentions to better address and handle SGBV in not only NATO Operations and Missions, but also other military organizations?

The ability to address and deal with gender inequality, SGBV, women’s limited influence and participation, and gender-based discrimination requires a comprehensive approach from a gender perspective—meaning that integration of a gender perspective is a way of assessing gender-based differences of women and men reflected in their social roles and interactions, in the distribution of power, and in access to resources. In ACO and ACT activities, these assessments are used synonymously with implementing UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions, as well as directives
emanating from within NATO. The aim of this approach is to take into consideration the particular situation and needs for men and women, as well as how the activities of NATO have different effects on them. More fundamentally, implementing a gender perspective is done by adapting action following a “gender analysis.” Gender analysis is defined as the systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and social relations in order to identify and understand inequities based on gender. It could also be understood as “methods used to understand the relationship between men and women in the context of the society.” For example, military planning activities should assess the different security concerns of women and men, girls and boys in the area of operation or take account of power relations in the community to ensure women and men have equal access to assistance where the military is engaged in supporting humanitarian assistance. Other examples would include understanding how customary conflict-resolution mechanisms affect women and men differently, and how each group’s social status may change as a result of war.

Today, numerous NATO operational as well as military force-led efforts are achieved with an integrated gender perspective. These efforts also hold direct relevance to strategies for addressing SGBV. Examples of such efforts involve security tasks such as guarding, patrolling, and escorting individuals and/or groups in vulnerable situations, as well as targeting insurgents and illegal combatants. Both in order to monitor and report regarding the security situation (including SGBV) for men, women, girls and boys, the presence of security forces will in itself have a deterring effect and create a better safety where they are deployed. According to Major General Karl Engelbrektson, a former battalion commander in NATO’s Kosovo operations (KFOR), during the Balkan Wars, there were certain parts of Kosovo where women felt so insecure that their families could not function as these women were too afraid of going out to buy food, taking the children to school, and other daily tasks. At that time, parts of the deployed NATO force planned publicly-known, as well as random, patrols in certain areas...
in order to increase freedom of movement for the women. This is a classical military task of creating a safe and secure environment (SASE) through conduct of military operations.

NATO, as well as other deployed military forces, can integrate a gender perspective to the regular tasks of training, advising, and assisting local forces. The importance of military personnel as role models and positive agents for change in this regard should not be underestimated, especially in mentoring and training. This is particularly true in the context of security sector reform and security force assistance, as well as in other capacity building exercises for local security forces which aim to increase local ability to address and handle issues of SGBV, and to provide equal security to men, women, girls, and boys in their society.

However, while these examples reflect some of what military forces already do, these tasks are not normally used to prevent and protect people from SGBV. The skills and tactics are in place, but are not conducted with the primary purpose to protect individuals from SGBV. There are best practices and good examples, but they remain more ad hoc than systematically integrated into the structures, procedure and tasks of military actors no matter organizational belonging.

CHALLENGES TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Even if NATO has accomplished a lot to date through the creation of a solid policy framework, training and education, and the integration of gender perspectives into operational planning and consultation with civil society organizations, there is still room for improvement regarding the actual implementation of UNSCR 1325. The recently published document “Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-led Operations and Missions” concludes that the structure, policies, and directives are now in place to support UNSCR 1325, but implementation remains a challenge.

Gender equality must encompass and consider both men’s and women’s role in the problem, as well as in the solution. The ability to deal with all these aspects is affected by a number of challenges to full implementation. The recent review found that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about both the principles behind UNSCR 1325, as well as regarding how it should be implemented. This has a particularly negative impact among commanders and the senior leadership who are responsible for implementation. Another challenge is a lack of cooperation and collaboration between security forces and civil society organizations, including
and women’s groups. There are also unclear mandates on how to address gender perspectives and SGBV. Instead, decisions about how to handle situations of sexual violence are made on the ground.

When deployed into missions, the rules of engagement (ROE) normally do not reflect UNSCR 1820, which specifically addresses sexual violence in armed conflict. However, a recent exception to this norm is the UN Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS) which possesses a mandate including a civilian protection role. This mandate component allows for the use of force against any party found attacking civilians (when all other option have been exhausted), even if experience indicates that the mission has problems delivering proactive, physical protection.44

While there are good practices in place, such as training initiatives, protective measures, cooperation between military and civilian actors, leadership, and reporting, they are not systematically disseminated and made available to others. Security forces and other security actors are for the most cases not properly directed, trained, and skilled in dealing with conflict related SGBV as an integrated part of their military or security enhancing capability.

Resources, as previously discussed, pose yet another challenge. Though SGBV is a problem for both males and females, access to donor funding is highly competitive, and female victims groups garner a far greater share of the funds. This resource competition extends into the visibility of implementation, where military gender-related and SGBV efforts often face criticism from civilian actors who do not feel gender issues belong under a military mandate. The friction between military and civilian actors subsequently creates a gap that should be filled. The solution to this requires identification of those structures and systems already in place which contain the skills and procedures to encourage cooperative SGBV prevention efforts. The necessity to fill these gaps in the nexus between...
security and development/humanitarian assistance is far too important to allow the focus to be on who should “do” and “not do” what. The relevant question and focus should instead be who can most effectively address or support SGBV challenges in terms of prevention and protection?

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO MOVE FORWARD**

NATO is a large, international political-military organization with the ability to demonstrate best practices throughout the world, particularly when it comes to capacity building and training for local security forces. This forms a key element in establishing upstream security in what will be a new, future paradigm for any military organization. NATO could help national security forces to take the lead in addressing gender-based violence by regularly liaising with and mentoring their forces. This stands to be enhanced through proper training development, with the establishment of “train the trainer” programs, support to establish structures and systems (for example recruitment and retention of women) and other leadership programs for local security institutions. Additionally, in the countries where NATO currently operates, we must work comprehensively with other organizations that operate in the security field, to ensure an integrated gender perspective based on the principles of women’s participation, protection, and prevention.

One key to accelerating the implementation of the WPS agenda is closer collaboration on all levels between international, regional, and local organizations and other relevant stakeholders. To identify and single out common prioritized areas would support unified focus and efforts, which would likely lead to even more effective implementation.

The aforementioned NATO Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 presented a recommendation that NATO ensures that training on UNSCR 1325, especially on participation, prevention and protection, occurs both pre-deployment and in theatre. This was specifically a strong recommendation regarding NATO commanders and individuals holding leadership positions. Another recommendation was to further strengthen and continue to build upon the structure of gender advisors being the guarantee that a gender perspective will be taken on board into planning conduct and evaluation of NATO led operations and missions, as NATO commanders and staff are not yet, themselves skilled in this regard.

It is imperative that any military or national security structure revises relevant intelligence, planning, reporting, and assessment tools so that they include a gender perspective, with the objective of facilitating gender main-
streaming through all phases of military operations. In order to guarantee this occurs, NATO member states should:

- Make the inclusion of a gender perspective and the principles of UNSCR 1325 a basic requirement for military orders, guidance and operational plans;
- Ensure that there is a roster of trained gender advisors, deployable to NATO’s missions;
- Ensure that gender advisor positions throughout the military system are filled and not left vacant; and
- Make UNSCR 1325 and gender mainstreaming a mandatory requirement in all education, training, and other exercises for military staff at all levels regardless of whether they are, or are about to be deployed in a theatre of conflict.

FUTURE MILITARY OPERATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES

The resources and assets that military forces hold could be used in the work towards ending conflict-related SGBV as well as achieving gender equality if political and organizational will is properly mustered. In order to use the potential capability of the military, directives need to be clear throughout the whole organization. Presently, the whole capacity of the military is not fully used, although it is within reach if effective directives and guidance are issued.

There are still many untapped resources and capabilities left to utilize by militaries and security actors, including private security, when it comes to combating SGBV. Below are just a few suggestions where a professional force would be adding unique competence.

The military can provide close protection for specific groups or individuals and if certain areas or events will need specific protective measures this is all achievable, if the decisions and resources are in place. This is what actors within the field of private security already have within their services portfolio and to direct that type of task towards individuals and or groups in risk of SGBV is clearly possible—it is mostly about funding and making the decisions. This kind of protection might not only be directed towards individuals at risk, but also towards human rights workers on the ground, or the staff of civil society organizations.

Hostage and rescue operations, including negotiations, are military capacities that could also be used in relation to prevention of and protec-
tion from SGBV. If decisions are made and resources are in place this can be done, and could be effectively utilized in the context of the kidnapping of the 200 girls in Nigeria by Boko Haram.

 Liaising with other military and security forces, as well as with the local population and representatives from local and international organizations is also of key importance. This type of liaison is important both from a situational awareness and a coordination perspective. Monitoring, mapping, and reporting of security threats towards specific individuals and groups, as well as improved security and risk analysis in specific regions and areas of operations could emerge from improved communication both among security actors, as well as between military and civilian/humanitarian organizations. This could serve to increase awareness regarding threats of SGBV, and to influence and inform the overall security response. Information collection, briefing and analysis skills are core capabilities within the military profession; if this capacity is used to map, analyze and assess gender related issues including SGBV, individuals at risk and or affected by this type of violence would be far better supported, and it would improve our early warning capacity.

 An additional use of these core military capabilities in information/data collection, monitoring trends, data analysis and reporting can be to support the collection of evidence fundamental to holding perpetrators accountable.

CONCLUSION

 Change can happen—and it is happening. From the perspectives of many civilians, the military and security forces have sometimes been part of the problem, but they could, and must be, part of the solution. Military and security forces should be viewed as role-models as well as drivers and agents for transformation and change. The process of change starts with actions and concrete lessons. The military has already the procedures and skill in place to address and handle (support the prevention and the protection) conflict related sexual violence and gender based violence. Positive effects will be achieved by displaying best practices, mentorship and setting the example for international partners. Additionally, military organizations must support more officers, soldiers, and operators to perform their daily work at all levels based on tactics, techniques, and procedures that respond to and handle sexual violence, and at all times, to operate with an integrated gender perspective. Military personnel, both male and female, should be used more often as agents for change when it comes to capacity building or reform within local security forces.
When implementing UNSCRs on women, peace and security, one fundamental principle is that the individuals and groups that are the beneficiaries of greater participation, prevention and protection must be consulted and have ownership of the process. This is also applicable when transforming an organization.

NATO and other international organizations have been making progress in this area, and are placing greater importance on the issue of gender-based violence. The UN Secretary-General’s annual report in April 2013 was the first to contain a list of people “named and shamed” for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. The list is the Security Council’s most recent tool in the fight against impunity, and it sends a strong signal to those who tolerate sexual violence by letting them know that they do so in defiance of international law.

As UK Foreign Secretary William Hague said in his first year anniversary speech of the UK Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative in May 2013, “[e]ach generation faces its own challenges, and each can shape our world for the better. Our generation has the opportunity, and the responsibility, to confront the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war.” There can be an end to conflict-related SGBV if the right instruments are in place, but the military must be leveraged as a key agent of change.

The key strategy for the military must be to focus on prevention and protection by ensuring that the security and safety of girls and women (as well as for men and boys) in emergency situations is addressed before violations take place. This is not only a security problem for individual women and girls, but as a security problem for society as a whole, and one which cannot solely be addressed through the typical responses of law enforcement and the judicial system.

These responding actors—whether consciously or not—have usually overlooked and/or sidelined the rights, needs and security of women and girls. It is time to consider directing these resources, skills and mandates towards the prevention and protection of women and girls in emergency situations. As the current SRSG on Conflict Related Sexual Violence
Zainab Hawa Bangura said in a recent debate in the UN Security Council, “[u]nfortunately, the unacceptable reality is that today it is still largely ‘cost-free’ to rape a woman, child or man in conflict. Sexual violence has been used through the ages precisely because it is such a cheap and devastating weapon.”

Until now society has lacked a clear solution for these situations, where training and awareness building alone are not enough to prevent atrocities. Sometimes the only suitable response to severe misdoings and threats is the deployment of an armed and professional force. If the right instruments, namely the resources and the directives, are in place within such a force, SGBV can and must be dealt with; if there is a will, there is always a way such that the eradication of gender based sexual violence can occur in our lifetime.

ENDNOTES
11 NATO, “NATO/EAPC Policy for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and related resolutions,” April 1, 2014
14 Ibid.
24 Hague.
32 Wallström and Shirreff.
33 Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape
37 www.protectourdefenders.org
38 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 NATO, “BI-STRATEGIC COMMAND DIRECTIVE (BI-SCD) 40-1 INTEGRATING UNSCR 1325 AND GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO THE NATO COMMAND STRUCTURE.”
42 Ibid.
43 Lackenbauer and Langlais.
45 Report of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (S/2013/149).